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**The *Yōkai* Imagination of Symbolism:  
The Role of Japanese Ghost Imagery  
in late 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> Century European Art  
Volumes I-III**

Samantha Sue Christina Rowe

**Volume I**



**MA by Thesis**

**School of Education (History of Art)**

**University of Durham**

**2015**

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Without these people, this dissertation would not exist.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the influence of the Japanese *yōkai*, or ghost, imagery upon late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Symbolist artists in Western Europe. Japanese *yōkai* imagery, which we find in diverse mediums such as Buddhist handscrolls, woodblock prints and *netsuke*, gave vivid expression to a long established belief in Japanese culture in the existence of a world of ghosts and demons existing on the thresholds and borders of material existence. *Yōkai* imagery represents a very distinctive genre in the visual arts of Japan and the purpose of this dissertation is to tease out the specific impact that this discrete form of imagery might have exerted upon the Symbolist imagination within the wider context of *japonisme* and *japonaiserie* in European modernism.

The dissertation begins with an exploration of the concept of *yōkai* in Japanese culture and discusses the history of their representation in the visual arts. The second chapter turns attention to the availability of such representations to avant-garde artists particularly in France and Britain in the late 19th century. An exploration of the incidence of such *yōkai* imagery in private collections, exhibitions and in publications on Japanese art and culture shows that a distinctive ‘ghost’ genre was extant and accessible at this time to those artists who wished to exploit in their work. The third chapter explores the ways in which the Symbolist generation developed existing discourses on the ghostly and supernatural in European culture, why they should have engaged with this and suggests that Japanese *yōkai* imagery offered them an innovative, ‘exotic’ and more subtle vocabulary of discourse with which to reflect their experience of modernity. Case studies of Aubrey Beardsley, Odilon Redon, Paul Gauguin, the designers associated with Art Nouveau and artists such as Toorop, Delville and Ensor suggests that, to some extent, all these artists engaged with *yōkai* imagery in their own artistic practice.

The dissertation concludes that evidence exists to show that this specific genre of Japanese art did, indeed, exert an impact upon Symbolist thought and practice in Western Europe and makes the case for further investigative study to confirm preliminary findings and to extend research into an area of art historical study that has hitherto been poorly researched and unappreciated.

## Introduction

In July 1924 Dr. Jean Vinchon, who was closely associated with the Surrealists, wrote an essay for the newly founded *Revue des Arts Asiatiques* entitled “Fantômes japonais”. This essay, as far as we know at present, represents the very first scholarly reflection upon one specific genre of Japanese art: the ghost print. In his essay Vinchon makes the claim, in passing, that these prints have, as he puts it “... inspired the origins of our modern art” (Vinchon, 1924: 22). He then cites as his example the work Aubrey Beardsley whose work, he says, clearly parallels the decorative feeling of the prints, their grace, the contrast of their formal techniques and employs the hieratic poses of the ghosts that they represent, which manifest in surprising and imaginative forms. To what extent did this genre of Japanese art impact upon late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century artists in Europe? What distinctive contribution, if any, did it make? Why should Western European artists engage with it? It is questions such as these that this dissertation seeks to address.

It is already well known and well documented that in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe a vogue for Japanese art and culture developed in Western Europe. This *japonisme* found expression across European society. Amongst the intelligentsia it became something to be studied, collected and exhibited. Amongst artists it became something which enabled them to engage with new forms of pictorial representation. In high society it stimulated new tastes in fashion and in music it provided the theme for Puccini’s music dramas on the one hand and the subject of popular operettas, such as Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Mikado* (1885), on the other. One of the key factors that stimulated this vogue for Japanese culture and *objets d’art* was that until the 1850s Japan had largely been cut off from the rest of the world by the isolationist policies of the Tokugawa *shogun* regime. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Tokugawa gradually lost their hold on power in Japan and by the 1850s trade routes were beginning to open up between Japan and the rest of the world. With the collapse of the shogunate in 1868 and the restoration of the Meiji, Japan more formally ‘opened for business’ and began a process of modernisation. In this context Japanese art objects and specifically woodcut, or woodblock, prints flooded into Europe where they exerted a dramatic impact upon modernist artists such as Manet, Degas, Monet, Van Gogh, Gauguin and many others. They offered these painters not only new and more expressive ways of thinking about image making but, owing to the fact that Japanese prints were considered to possess an



‘exotic’ even ‘primitive’ quality, these sources permitted painters to develop a type of art that, because it was couched in the rhetoric of the Japanese print, itself emblematised those qualities. In short the Japanese print offered the modernist artist a means of opposing the cultural norms of the refined, bourgeois status quo, represented by the hide-bound rules and classicised subjects of the Royal Academy in London and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The Japanese woodcut print provided an inspirational avenue through which artists at the time could explore and express their experience of a rapidly modernising world from which, for the most part, they felt completely dislocated.

There are several *genres* of Japanese woodcut print. Perhaps the most numerous are those known as *bijin-ga* or ‘portraits of beautiful women’, which represent, in the main, the *geisha* or courtesans. *Shunga*, or erotic prints, also make up a large percentage of the prints as do the landscape scenes of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other genres include *yakusha-e*, or *kabuki* actor portraits and *musha-e*, or warrior prints the majority of which date from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Here, however, we will focus upon the less well-known and less-researched *genre* of the *yōkai* print, which are those prints pertaining to the supernatural. *Yōkai* is the general term in Japanese that encompasses all supernatural entities, which includes all categories and sub-categories of ghosts and demons alike. In these prints the ghost, demon or specific ghost story is represented as a subject in its own right. *Yōkai* imagery, however, was not restricted to the woodblock print for *yōkai* were also represented within other mediums such as Japanese picture scrolls (*emaki*) and picture books (*ehon*) and ornamental objects such as netsuke and small sculptures made for Buddhist and Shintō shrines and secular festivals. In addition to being represented as a primary subject, *yōkai* imagery also found expression as a secondary subject through the genre of the theatre print. The rich tradition of Japanese ghost stories was often employed as subject matter for plays in both *kabuki* and *noh* theatre, and therefore *yōkai* subjects often appear in these theatre prints as a secondary theme.

Although examples of the *yōkai* print had begun to arrive in Western Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the genre, unlike many of its siblings, seems to have gone undiscussed in the critical literature until Vinchon published his essay in 1924. This does not mean, however, that the genre went unappreciated by contemporary artists and collectors, but it does perhaps explain why, in the Art Historical literature, so little has been written on the possible impact of this genre on modernist art when so much has been written on

the impact exerted by the better known genres of *bijin-ga*, *yakusha-e* and the landscape print. Taking Vinchon's observation as our starting point, then, we commence our investigation by sketching in the history and development of *yōkai* imagery in Japanese culture. This will take us from its origins in religion and folklore into the realm of the Buddhist handscroll and beyond in the history of the woodblock print itself. We will examine what makes the Japanese conceptualisation of a ghost so distinctive in comparison to Western conceptualisations and will explore the iconography employed in the representation of such *yōkai* as well as the subversive purposes to which it was so often put in the twilight years of the shogunate.

The second chapter will seek to explore the means by which Western Europe first encountered Japanese art and culture and hence the ways in which the *yōkai* image finally left its native country and came to the West. Trade links between Europe and Japan had, in fact, existed during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and so we will argue that examples of Japanese art and material culture first arrived at this point in time, before Japan's period of isolation during the Edo period. Principally, however, we will concentrate our attention on the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, once trade routes began to open up again during the last years of the shogunate and the first of the imperial restoration. It was at this time that it became fashionable for erudite Europeans to collect Japanese art and artefacts, to study them, catalogue them, exhibit them and sell them. In discussing the reception of the prints at this time in Western Europe particular attention will focus on the extent to which *yōkai* prints in particular were known, collected and appreciated. In addition we will discuss the contemporary vogue in Western Europe for translations of Japanese ghost stories and retellings of *yōkai* tales. Mitford and Lafcadio Hearn, for example, both publicised the genre of the Japanese ghost story in their books which, whilst published in English, had an international currency. This much is evident from the testimony of Jean Vinchon who, in the opening comments of his 1924 essay writes of the enormous impact of both Mitford's and Hearn's book in spreading knowledge about the Japanese ghost story.

The vogue for *japonisme* in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century spread across Europe and the influence of the Japanese print was particularly evident in the art works of those artists associated with Impressionism and Symbolism. Assuming at this juncture that Vinchon may be correct in his assessment about the specific impact of *yōkai* imagery upon the work of

modernist artists at this time; we will attempt to explain why this iconography in particular spoke to the modernist painter. To what extent did this distinctive and very novel form of ghost imagery permit the artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to engage in a long-standing fascination on the part of European painters with the ghost imagery and to what possible ends? Given that Vinchon specifically names Beardsley as an artist whose work exhibits close parallels to the *yōkai* genre, we will begin by a brief consideration of his work in this respect but will then consider the nature and uses of ghost imagery in the work of artists from both the Medieval and Romantic periods in order to explain why late 19<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde artists such as Beardsley should be attracted to the rhetoric of the ghost print, and what this specific form of Japanese imagery could offer them that more traditional European representations could not. Throughout the dissertation we will adopt a socio-historical approach to the questions being asked and necessarily, therefore, we will be considering at this juncture the complex relationships between late 19<sup>th</sup> century European artists and their society as a means of understanding the attraction of *yōkai* imagery. This dissertation aims to analyse the relationship between these artists and the influence of the Japanese *yōkai* print on two levels: directly by way of comparison of the Japanese prints and the artists' work and also indirectly by considering how the attitude of the Japanese towards the supernatural may have influenced the context as well as the form of the work produced by these Western artists.

The remainder of our enquiry will focus upon specific case studies of artists and the possible ways in which they referred to and exploited the *yōkai* tradition. Wherever possible evidence is advanced to support the views and comparisons being made. At times, however, some comparisons and the conclusions drawn from them are necessarily speculative. This is an important point to note. In the case of some artists, such as Gauguin and Ensor, we have strong evidence linking them to an interest in the *yōkai* tradition, whilst in the case of others, such as Redon, evidence is currently scarce. The dissertation, then, seeks to do two things:

- i) explore the validity of Jean Vinchon's observation where evidence exists and
- ii) where evidence is not immediately forthcoming, to make a case, based upon the context as we can best construct it and on formal comparisons of like with like, for a more extensive research project that might advance our knowledge of this theme. In other words the dissertation aims not only to reflect upon the nature of influence where

the evidence clearly supports it but also to act as a pilot study where, given the limiting parameters of the current research project, evidence is not immediately forthcoming. The dissertation, therefore, makes a case for further investigation to support and validate some of the more tentative conclusions to which we will arrive.

In the later chapters of the dissertation specific attention will focus on Odilon Redon and Paul Gauguin. These two Symbolist artists, we will argue, were partly predisposed towards an interest in the *yōkai* tradition as a result of their personal biography, which conferred upon them both a sense of difference and distance in relation to the society of their day. However, as Symbolist artists, both Redon and Gauguin shared a particular world view as regards modernity and, as we will argue, deployed references to *yōkai* imagery in their work as a means of negotiating their views about it and their responses to it. Although formal comparison will represent an important aspect of our methodology our approach will be grounded in a socio-historical view which explains the attraction of this imagery not only as a means of innovative and expressive artistic representation but also as potent means of reflecting upon the complexities of the socio-political, economic and cultural context in which these artists found themselves. Of course both Redon and Gauguin were very different personalities and as we will attempt to show, they exploited the *yōkai* tradition in different ways and for different purposes. Redon seems to use the bizarre imagery of the Japanese ghost tradition to stir the imagination and to place the viewer in the world of the indeterminate, shocking them out of conventional ways of thought and opening up creative and imaginative spaces in a world which was busy closing them down. Gauguin, on the other hand may be seen to be exploiting this imagery to stir up a sense of spirituality, to call the forth the supernatural and to invoke a sense of 'primitive' 'authenticity' in his work as a means of contesting a world which he found overly materialistic, artificial and hopelessly divorced from Nature and the world of feeling.

Our attention will then focus upon those artist-designers associated with Art Nouveau. To what extent, if any, did the world of design respond to the *yōkai* traditions? One of the most famous of French Art Nouveau jewellery designers, Henri Vever, was himself a collector of Japanese prints and we know that in his collection he possessed several *yōkai* works. We will explore the possible impact of this tradition upon two designs produced by the Maison Vever before engaging with a case study of Émile Gallé's Art

Nouveau glassware and the ceramics of Dalpayrat. These artists we will argue not only reference *yōkai* imagery directly in their work but also were inspired by the strong degree of abstraction that the *yōkai* tradition exhibited at the formal level, its “decorative sensibility” as Vinchon describes it (Vinchon, 1924: 22). Finally, as means of broadening out our study and of demonstrating the possibly impact of Japanese ghost imagery beyond Britain and France, we will explore the case of artists at work in Holland and Belgium. Toorop, Delville and Ensor all offer fruitful case studies that suggest the influence of the *yōkai* tradition was geographically widespread and filtered into Symbolist discourses across Europe.

The dissertation concludes that Vinchon was correct in his assessment that the so-called modern art of his own day had its origins in the *yōkai* tradition, or, more precisely perhaps, that the *yōkai* tradition represented one of the sources upon which artistic modernism fed and developed. There does, indeed, appear to be a body of evidence to support Vinchon’s assessment. As noted above, however, the research limitations of the present enquiry mean that some of our conclusions regarding supposed influence and inspiration remain speculative. A fuller and more incisive research intervention is really required to extend the scope and findings that this dissertation, in many cases, mere hints at. To this end, however, the dissertation fulfils its second aim, to act as a pilot study to stimulate further research into an area of art-historical learning of which little is known and much yet remains to be discovered.

The dissertation makes use of many Japanese terms with which the reader may be unfamiliar. These terms are detailed and explained in two appendices at the end of this volume. Appendix I is a glossary of general Japanese terms used throughout the dissertation whilst Appendix II is a glossary of specifically *Yōkai* vocabulary. Images that are discussed in the text are reproduced in *Volume II: Images* and may be found under their appropriate plate numbers. The main bibliography is located at the end of this volume. However a third volume accompanies the dissertation. *Volume III* acts as an illustrated *catalogue raisonné* of contemporary published sources on Japanese art and design up to 1924 (the date of Vinchon’s essay) that were available to the artists with whom this dissertation is concerned. This additional volume is intended not only to secure the evidential basis upon which the dissertation rests but also to provide a valuable resource for future scholars working within the field.

## **Chapter I**

### **Hyakki Yagyō - Night Parade of One Hundred Demons**

#### **The Japanese Ghost and Ghost Print**

The following chapter is intended to present an overview of the supernatural within Japanese culture by detailing the intricacies of the *yōkai* (ghosts) and providing a comparison with the Western notion of a ghost and the ghost story. It will also discuss the relationship of the Shintō and Buddhist religions to the folklore of Japan as well as providing the social context within which the art of the *ukiyo-e* developed.

An apposite précis of the Japanese supernatural creature is provided by Donald Richie, as quoted in his introduction “The Japanese Ghost” to John Stevenson’s book *Yoshitoshi’s Thirty-Six Ghosts*: “The Japanese ghost, whether impelled by love or by hate, is a being all passion - a truly frightening spectacle” (Richie, 1983: 6). This is the key to all further understanding of the Japanese ghost: passion. As a comparison, a Western ghost may often be referred to as a soul ‘in limbo’, or a soul with ‘unfinished business’; an imprint of the soul of the dead party that has remained on earth, unable to ascend to heaven or wherever its chosen final resting place may lie. The implication here is that the ghost does not understand why it is a ghost or why it has remained on earth. Often the spirit is depicted as being unaware of their death or their surroundings. A Western ghost story may often focus on uncertainty; the uncertainty of the haunted individual as to whether their unusual experiences are the work of a supernatural entity or are the work of their own imagination, and it is this uncertainty that creates the suspense in a Western ghost story. The ghost story *The Turn of the Screw*, 1898, by Henry James (1843-1916) can be referenced as an example, for the story tells of a governess who, while employed to take care of two young children, a boy and a girl, begins to notice the appearance of a man and a woman when in the presence of the children, with the implication that their appearance is supernatural in nature. The governess discovers that before her tenure there were two former servants, a man and a woman, who prior to their deaths had been involved in a relationship with each other and who had also had an unusual relationship with the two children. The story ends leaving the reader questioning either the sanity of the governess or the reality of the man and woman as supernatural beings. Born from a place of emotion rather than simply death alone however, the Japanese

ghost is created for a purpose, be it vengeance or love; these entities know what they want and how to achieve it. This is reflected in the Japanese ghost story by the fact that the supernatural entity is rarely questioned, therefore the suspense in the story is created by the actions of the spirit towards the haunted individual or by what lengths the haunted party has to go to in order to rid himself or herself of the ghost. There is a Japanese ghost story of a rock known as 'the nightly weeping rock' situated on the road that connects Edo and Kyoto, as told by Brenda Jordan in her chapter "*Yūrei: Tales of Female Ghosts*" from the book *Japanese Ghosts and Demons*, edited by Stephen Addiss. The story tells of a pregnant lady who was murdered while travelling on this road, from Nissaka, on her way to meet her husband in Kanaya. The woman's spilled blood landed on the rock, imbuing it with her spirit. The murderer was never caught and the spirit of the pregnant lady is said to cry through the rock, weeping at the injustice of her untimely death (Jordan, 1985: 26-27).

There are many variations of the Japanese ghost, or *yōkai*. The closest *yōkai* in appearance and behaviour to a Western ghost would be the *yūrei* (see Appendix I). A *yūrei* is the ghost of an individual whose death was unjust or sudden, although it may still display the behaviours and characteristics of our own Western ghosts in so far as it tends to be translucent in nature, thus preferring to make itself known during the night rather than in broad daylight, and any disguise it may have adopted will not hold when challenged with a reflective surface. Yet there is one subtle but powerful difference that sets them apart and this is that Japanese *yūrei* are almost exclusively always depicted as female. Donald Richie's refreshing theory on why this may be is that:

"The Japanese ghost is constructed by males for males. I have yet to meet a Japanese woman who does other than smile at the antics of a Tsuyu or an Oiwa. They know that they are looking at a ghost all right, but that it is really a ghostly reflection of the hopes and fears of the Japanese male, fantasies which hope to somehow account (at the woman's expense, of course) for all the disquiet that the male everywhere must occasionally feel in the presence of the female."  
(Richie, 1983: 9).

Generally speaking, a marked difference between the Western ghost story and the Japanese ghost story can be found when considering the protagonists of each story; in a Western ghost story the protagonist will often be the haunted individual, with a higher percentage being male rather than female yet in a Japanese ghost story the protagonist is more often the ghost or the supernatural entity and it is more common for the leading

spiritual entity in a Japanese ghost story to be female, usually a female that has, in some way, been the subject of a severe injustice, choosing to exact their revenge in a manner most terrifying to the principal offender. As a comparison one may consider the ghost story by Montague Rhodes James (1862-1936) known as *Count Magnus* and the Japanese ghost story *Sarayashiki Okiku no rei* (*The Ghost of Okiku at Sarayashiki*). All the main characters of James' *Count Magnus* are male: the story begins with an introduction by the author himself describing the experiences of the protagonist, a Mr. Wraxall, with an unknown supernatural entity whom Wraxall encounters while researching material for a book; it is suggested, although never confirmed, that the entity is believed to be the malevolent spirit of Count Magnus De la Gardie. The reader is led to believe that Mr. Wraxall is ultimately killed by the spirit of Count Magnus, the grisly details of which are merely alluded to rather than described in full (James, 1904). The protagonist of *Sarayashiki Okiku no rei* is a servant girl, known as Okiku. Okiku was a servant girl to the *samurai* Aoyama Tessen. It is said that Aoyama had in his possession ten valuable porcelain plates which he charged Okiku with keeping safe. One of the plates was broken, there are several versions of this story that explain how, but each version ends with the death of Okiku, either by suicide or at the hands of Aoyama, and her body being trapped in the well located on Aoyama's property<sup>1</sup>. This well was henceforth haunted by the ghost of Okiku; each night her spirit would appear to torment Aoyama, by rising out of the well and counting slowly from one to nine, never reaching ten. Her spirit would then issue a frightening scream and disappear back into the well, to repeat the process the next night (Stevenson, 1983: 52). It is this story that is so vividly represented in Hokusai's now famous print (Pl. 1). The main difference between these two stories is that the focus of the story by M. R. James is that of Mr. Wraxall and how he is the haunted individual whose death occurs, allegedly, because of the ghost in the story whereas the focus of *Sarayashiki Okiku no rei* is Okiku, who becomes the ghost after losing her life due to the actions of others, and how it is that she haunts her killer.

However, not all Japanese ghosts are malevolent creatures; some ghosts bear the initiate of their pain no ill will but are merely waiting for a promise to be fulfilled. The publication *Ugetsu Monogatari: Tales of moonlight and rain* by Ueda Akinari contains a story, as translated by Leon M. Zolbrod, of a silk seller, who, due to the outbreak of a war, became trapped for many years in Kyoto, after having promised his wife, who was much distressed at the thought of him leaving, that he would return to her by the



Autumn of the year of his departure. When the man is eventually able to return he discovers his wife in their home whereupon they talk all night, falling asleep in the early hours of dawn. Upon awakening the silk seller realises he is alone, and his house is a ruin. He is told that his wife died many years previously from the grief of his prolonged absence and her spirit had not been able to settle until the silk seller's promise to return had been fulfilled (Ueda/Zolbrod, c.1776/1974). It has been noted that there is a positive correlation between the distress experienced by the dying female and the subsequent hostility of the ghost (Jordan, 1985: 26-27). *Onryō* for instance, the most aggressive and fearsome type of *yūrei*, are formed when an individual, at the point of death, is especially impassioned perhaps with hatred or rage, or even jealousy borne from a vehement love. The curse of the *onryō* is so intense that it will linger even after the spirit has passed on (Meyer, 2012: 164).

The process of becoming a ghost to the Japanese seems to be more intricate than one would first believe. It is not simply a case of dying and transforming into a ghost, even the word for 'ghost' in Japanese (*kai*) does not refer solely to a 'ghost', but rather operates as a generic term for all supernatural entities (also referred to as *yōkai*), be they monsters, shape-shifters, demons and everything in between (Stevenson, 1983: 13). Monsters and ghosts within Japanese culture are not quite the separate entities that they are within Western culture; they are much more closely associated: "The Western tradition is that we can have a ghost *or* a monster. In Japan, however, the connection is much more intimate: ghosts *and* monsters" (Richie, 1983: 6). There is a similar distinction with certain supernatural animals. In the Western world black cats are considered to be linked to the supernatural, mostly by their association as the companion to a witch. In Japanese culture the fox is commonly considered as a supernatural animal but it does not act as the companion to something, it is itself supernatural, more of a shape-shifter, individuals can turn into foxes (known as *kitsune*) and vice versa, they are one and the same (Richie, 1983: 6). A number of Japanese ghost prints make reference to the fox as a supernatural creature, for example *Princess Yaegaki*, and *Otome (Maiden)* from the series *Waken nazorae Genji (Japanese and Chinese Comparisons for the Chapters of the Genji)*, 1855 by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (c.1797-1861) (Pls. 88 & 89).

The factors involved, the way in which the individual dies, the emotional state of the individual at the time of death and the reason behind the death all play a part in dictating the type of *yōkai* the individual will become. For example an abnormal death such as a sudden accident, can cause one's spirit to take the form of a degrading animal, perhaps a snake, whereas death brought on by a malady of some description could mean the individual becomes a monster or a demon (Yamamoto, 1985). The woodblock print *Shunen (Implacable Malevolence)*, from the series *Hyaku Monogatari* by the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) illustrates what appear to be a memorial tablet and memorial offerings with a ghost, possibly of the recently deceased, in the form of a snake coiled around them (Pl. 2) (Hillier, 1978: 112).

On the matter of the supernatural, the Western world tends to be divided into those who believe and those who do not, with the majority of individuals falling into the category of 'those who do not'. However that is not to say that all things spiritual are unpopular in the West, quite the contrary, fantasy is always in fashion. Today the media market is flooded with books and films that focus on supernatural and mythical beings and creatures from ghosts and wights to wizards and vampires. It was no different during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the incredible popularity of stories from authors such as Edgar Allan Poe (*Ligeia*, 1838; *The Hallowed Palace*, 1839) and Bram Stoker (*Dracula*, 1897). Yet these stories of spirits and the supernatural tend to remain as stories; their place in Western society is situated within the media, their purpose being one of entertainment. Japanese culture however has traditionally taken a more integrated attitude towards those entities of a supernatural persuasion. This unquestionable acceptance of the spirit world has its foundations in the traditional folklore of pre-modern Japan. An example would be the Japanese ritual of *susuharai*, which is the cleaning of the home and everything within to avoid the contamination of household objects by evil spirits. Essentially any inanimate object has the potential to contain within itself a deity or spirit of some kind (Yamamoto, 1985). One belief of the Shintō religion was that a *kami* (a form of a soul) could be found within anything that belonged to the natural world (Stevenson, 1983: 10). The original inhabitants of the four largest islands of Japan are said to be the Ainu people whose religious beliefs were animistic in origin. Animism as a religious notion holds the belief that a soul or a spirit exists within all physical objects in the entire natural world from humans and animals to plants, rivers and rocks as well as those elements of nature such as thunder or the wind. The Shintō belief that all objects,

whether animate or inanimate, hold the potential to possess a *kami* is believed to have been adopted from the animism of the Ainu religion (Storry, 1960: 24). This focus on nature developed within the Shintō religion and on into Buddhism where Gods and Buddhas were believed to reside within mountains or trees. During the Heian period (710-794) there developed a movement known as the *Shungedō* movement, a mountain religion due to its focus on the main dwelling sites for Buddhist deities being sacred mountainous regions (known as *reizan*) (Yamamoto, 1985).

The Ainu people had only spoken language, not written language, and so relied upon oral tradition to transmit their beliefs and their folklore (Storry, 1960: 24). Oral traditions of storytelling are an important aspect of the development of pre-modern Japanese culture; the folk stories told and re-told were not merely to entertain but were used as a teaching tool. In the absence of the written word, the oral tradition of folklore provided a means of establishing acceptable and unacceptable cultural conduct, while being entertaining and thus memorable enough to pass down through the generations. Tales involving the supernatural and spirit world were often used as a deterrent against certain behaviours; ghost stories and superstitions used a degree of fear to provide an effective method through which to instil those virtues important to the Japanese and their cultural values. As Michiko Iwasaka and Barre Toelken observe in their book *Ghosts and the Japanese, Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends* the importance of these folk tales is shown through how they have survived generation to generation; those tales that included a valuable moral lesson were the tales that were remembered and repeated, not necessarily because the stories were believed, but rather because it was the message they sought to convey was considered significant (Iwasaka & Toelken, 1994: 20). A useful example is the tale of Oiwa. This well know story, which was also illustrated in Hokusai's series *Hyaku Monogatari* or, in translation, *The Night Parade of 100 Demons* (Pls. 3a & 3b), describes how Oiwa haunts her husband, the former *Samurai* Iyemon, causing him to kill his new bride, his new father-in-law and ultimately himself<sup>2</sup> (Stevenson, 1983: 88). However underneath this is a tale of marital relations and how to properly conduct oneself within a marriage. The story teaches of the consequences of betrayal, cowardice and selfishness (Iwasaka & Toelken, 1994: 44). Betrayal, because the hideous appearance of Oiwa was caused by the consumption of a potion given to her by the father of another woman who was in love with Iyemon; the potion was disguised as a medicine to help Oiwa recover from giving birth but caused a facial disfigurement,

which subsequently led Iyemon to abandon Oiwa, disgusted. Cowardice and selfishness are indicated through the actions of Iyemon who, rather than admitting that he no longer wished to remain married to Oiwa, began to abuse her in the hope that she would leave him, thus leading Oiwa to commit suicide in despair at the rejection (Stevenson, 1983: 88). The consequences of this immoral treatment of Iyemon and others towards Oiwa are insanity and death, which translate into unhappiness and loss.

However the practice of engaging with the supernatural via oral tradition was not solely used as a method of creating social order, nor was it confined to religious ritual alone. It is important to understand that this fascination with the supernatural was established before the introduction of Buddhism in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Both before and during the Shintō era the Japanese affiliation with spirits and ghosts permeated other non-religious areas of society with just as much success, including the arts, and as a means of providing entertainment. The telling of ghost stories within a group was one such example of social entertainment; originated by the *samurai* class as a show of courage but eventually adopted by all was the game *Hyaku Monogatari* (One Hundred Supernatural Tales): one hundred lit candles and a small mirror were placed in a room, the participants then each took turns to tell a ghost story or recount a supernatural experience and at the end of their tale they would enter the candle-lit room, blow out a candle and look into the mirror. As the room became steadily darker it was believed to create a channel through which spirits or ghosts could pass into the Land of the Living and that as the last candle was extinguished and the room was in total darkness, something terrible and ghostly would occur (Deguchi, 1985: 18-19). Another such game was *Kimo-dameshi* (soul examination) where several flags would be positioned in a haunted venue such as a cemetery and as with *Hyaku Monogatari*, the stories would be recounted in a location hidden from the flags. Once finished, the story-teller would have to enter the haunted venue and recover a flag (Stevenson, 1983: 10). Iwasaka and Toelken, who visited the Zenshōan Temple in Ueno Park, central Tokyo, observed that the tradition of telling ghost stories continued to exist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century where, during the festival of *Obon*, the festival of the deceased, “master storytellers” still convened at the Zenshōan Temple to recount such supernatural tales (Iwasaka & Toelken, 1994: xix-xx).

Early folklore was thus absorbed by Shintō and developed through into Buddhism, which, from its arrival in Japan in the mid-6th century AD, incorporated the traditional ghostly beliefs of the folklore from pre-modern Japan (Yamamoto, 1985). It was these beliefs that helped retain order within society. The sense of respect that the Japanese people have for the elderly stems from the belief in ancestral spirits of those deceased relatives bestowing posthumous assistance upon the surviving family members (Yamamoto, 1985).

The rich oral tradition of the Japanese began to acquire a written form at some point in the early 8th century AD. The earliest written sources now extant are the *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters*) and the *Nihongi* (*Chronicles of Japan*) said to have been written in 712 and 720 respectively, initially from the memories of one individual: Hiyeda no Are. Hiyeda no Are had by order of the Emperor Temmu (673-686), memorised this mythology and then recited it for the transcription of the *Kojiki* at the request of the Empress Gemmio (708-715) (Piggott, 1969: 25-26). Subsequently, an extensive body of *yōkai* literature developed in which those who could write recorded local legends of ghosts and monsters and it is these that later provided the imaginative source material for the Japanese print-makers of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this way oral traditions became embodied and preserved in a popular and much appreciated literary form. The French scholar Eric Faure, one of the leading experts in the field of *yōkai* literature, has recently recorded many of these early stories and compendia on the theme of *yōkai* and has translated them and retold them for the Western audience. This discrete *genre* of Japanese literature takes two forms: both secular and religious. Secular texts deal very much with *oni* (demons that manifest in a specific physical form and are associated with a particular locale, see also Appendix II). Perhaps the most famous of these, of which many stories are told, is that of the *oni* of the Rashōmon Gate in Kyoto, which was first recorded in a compendium of 1104 entitled *Stories told by Ōe no Masafusa* recorded by Gōdanshō (Faure, 2006: 13). The religious texts that deal with *yōkai* are Buddhist.

According to the *Kojiki* pre-Buddhist Shintō belief entertained a tripartite universe comprising: *Yomi-no-kuni* (the World for the Dead); *Naka-tsu-kuni* (the Central Land of the Living), which was also the land to which the earthly deities belonged; *Takama-ga-hara* (the Plain of High Heaven, or the world of the *kami*, or soul) (Yamamoto, 1985).

One may notice the symbiotic nature of spirits and the living within these three worlds. Although after death one would transcend from the *Naka-tsu-kuni* to the *Yomi-no-kuni* there was opportunity to return; each year a festival is held, *Obon*, in honour of those since departed ancestors<sup>3</sup>. Offerings are left on household altars and a stylised dance called an *Obon-dori* is performed to allow the spirits to return to the Land of the Living (Richie, 1983: 7-9).

Buddhism is believed to have been initially introduced to Japan in approximately 552, identified by the arrival of a gold and copper image of Buddha along with several Buddhist scriptures, noted in the *Nihongi* as a gift from a Korean king (Piggott, 1969: 32). Buddhism did not replace the Shintō religion; Shintō was only named as such as a means of distinguishing Buddhism and Shintō, prior to this the Shintō religion had known no official title (Piggot, 1969: 42). However Buddhism did absorb the folklore and mythology of Shintō while also introducing iconography and imagery within its religious practice. In addition, Buddhism is credited with the development of the Japanese characters *hiragana*, said to have been conceived by the Buddhist monk Kobo Daishi (774-834) (Piggot, 1969: 50-51). The combination of Buddhist imagery and both the *hiragana* and *katagana* Japanese characters during the Heian or Fujiwara period (794-1185) led to the introduction of religious literature, by way of sutras and scrolls, which included the representation of the many deities, creatures and spirits associated with Japanese mythology (Piggott, 1969: 33-34; 54). We know that thirty-two such *emaki* (Buddhist scrolls) known as the *Istukushimakyo* were presented to the Itsukushima shrine in 1141 (Anonymous, 1932: 88). The databases of the Nichibunken library from the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in Kyoto have access to several scrolls devoted specifically to the depiction of *yōkai* and various supernatural creatures ([db.nichibun.ac.jp](http://db.nichibun.ac.jp)). These scrolls, which are now kept in the museum of the prefecture of Fukuoka, are supernatural bestiaries which picture the ghosts, spirits and monsters of Japanese culture. One of the scrolls, entitled *Hyakkai-zukan* (*The Illustrated Volume of 100 Demons*) painted in 1737 by the artist Sawaki Suushi, is of particular importance since it established an iconography for specific demons and ghosts that remained in place throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Pls. 4a-j). This set of 30 paintings on the theme of *yōkai* features a possible *hyōsube* next to a *nure-onna* as well as representations of *akashita*, *yamawaro*, *kami-kiri*, *otoroshi*, *rokuro-kubi*, *yama-uba*, *yūrei* and *kami-kiri* as well as many others (see Appendix II) to which we will refer later.

The monster or ghost was an effective tool for the Buddhist monks and stories about them were told in the handscrolls to convey moral learning. In the Buddhist tradition, however, the ghost served a specific function in the Buddhist cosmology.

With the integration of Buddhist religious beliefs came the notion of *Yomi-no-muni*, or the Land of the Dead, as a place of punishment; it became a Hell rather than just the resting place for the spirits of the deceased. Similarly, *Takama-ga-hara*, the world of the *kami*, became the Land of the Buddha, or High Heaven and herewith the natural assumption that where one's spirit spent the rest of eternity (High Heaven or Hell), after having departed the natural world, was influenced by the behaviour displayed during the time it spent alive in the Land of the Living (Yamamoto, 1985). Buddhism entertained a specific dislike of excess in any form and therefore promoted the view that those who indulged in gluttony and debauchery would become 'hungry ghosts', or *gaki*, in the afterlife. Indeed, many of the Buddhist handscrolls feature the realm of 'hungry ghosts' whose fate it was to feed only on the excrement of the living (Pls. 108a-c).

In addition Buddhism encouraged certain beliefs and rituals around the concept of death and placed certain obligations on the surviving relatives, who, for example, were required to read the Buddhist *sutras* seven and then forty nine days after death as part of the *hōji* ceremony to ease the passing of the deceased (Iwasaka & Toelken, 1994: 24). It is assumed that elderly relatives are destined, once they have passed, to become an ancestor spirit however once deceased the spirit lingers in a spiritual plane that exists between *Naka-tsu-kuni* (the Central Land of the Living) and *Takama-ga-hara* (High Heaven). This is a precarious existence, if the ghost of the departed individual is possessed of a particularly powerful emotion at the time of death, perhaps jealousy or anger, it has the opportunity to return to the natural world to haunt and torture those that remain until its grievance is resolved (Jordan, 1985). It is therefore in the best interests of the deceased's loved ones to endeavour to do all that they can to encourage the passage of this spirit into the next world. The Japanese name two stages to a recently deceased spirit: *aramitara* and *sorei*. Initially a spirit is known as an *aramitara*, an unclean spirit in need of purification. This cleansing is accomplished through the living family members executing 'rituals of appeasement', of which the *hōji* ceremony is only one. Rituals are performed up to seven years after death, and tend to occur on specific dates, for example on the seventh, twenty first and forty ninth days post death

or exactly one year after and so forth. Once cleansed the spirits are known as *sorei* and are free to move through to the Land of the Buddha where they are united with familial ancestral spirits to continue protecting and guiding those living relatives of the *Naka-tsu-kuni* (Land of the Living) (Yamamoto, 1985).

Alongside Buddhism, during the rule of the Tokugawa (c. 1615-1868), there arose a renewed interest in the ideologies of Confucianism, known as Neo-Confucianism, which centred around the existence of *ri* and *ki*. *Ri* is essentially one's inner morality and *ki* are one's emotions or desires which prevent the development of one's *ri*. Neo-Confucianism promoted the conquering of one's desires in order to be able to focus on allowing one's *ri* to dominate. In order to achieve this state of existence Neo-Confucianism encouraged adherence to a particular social etiquette involving the proper method in which to conduct oneself within a superior/subordinate relationship, citing the five fundamental relationships as those between: father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, older and younger brother, friend and friend. The difference between Buddhism and Confucianism is simplified by Paul Varley: "whereas Buddhism aspired to perfection in another world, Neo-Confucianism sought it in this world" (Varley, 2000: 171-172). Varley also makes a connection between the controlling rule of the Tokugawa shogunate and the approach of Neo-Confucianism to controlling one's *ki* by promoting precise order within the social chain (Varley, 2000: 172).

The Tokugawa shogunate, in effect a military dictatorship, that governed Japan for nearly 250 years, was founded in 1615 by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616)<sup>4</sup> (Storry, 1960: 59). The rule of the Tokugawa dynasty lasted until 1868 and brought peace to a country that had known only civil war for generations, since the collapse of the Imperial system under the first shogun Minamoto Yoritomo in 1192 AD. The Tokugawa dynasty entrenched their own power and brought peace to the country through a combination of strict control and suppression. As a preventative measure against an uprising of the daimyo the Tokugawa enforced a system known as *sankin kōtai*, a system whereby the *daimyo* were ordered to spend alternate years between their domain and in residence at the shogunate court in Edo; the *daimyo* were also expected to leave their families in Edo when they returned to reside in their domains. This method of government prevented the formation of any group of *daimyos* large enough to challenge the shogunate and also prevented the accumulation of substantial individual wealth due to the expense of the



annual travel to and from Edo. The separation of the *daimyo* from his family acted as an additional deterrent against resisting the rule of the Tokugawa. This restriction of social movement was applied within and across all social classes of *daimyos*, *samurai*, peasants (farmers and artisans) and *chōnin* and was intended to prevent those members of the peasant class rising to the status of *samurai* as they had been able to previously<sup>5</sup> (Varley, 2000: 168-169).

The control of the Tokugawa over most of Japan was therefore absolute. They limited the impact of foreign influences by isolating Japan from both its immediate neighbours and the West through restricting the importation of goods, especially those related to Christianity, so as not to taint the traditions of the Japanese culture with the modern concepts of Western society. They also controlled the production of goods within Japan itself and most especially within the arts. Whilst the Industrial Revolution was spreading across Europe, the focus of the Tokugawa was upon tradition and the prolonging and preserving of the cultural heritage of Japan. Official schools were endorsed by the shogunate to produce official artists that would create art that conformed to the traditional standards set by the Tokugawa. The official artistic school was the Kano school of art which was divided into four schools: Kajibaski, Nakabaski, Kobichō and Hamachō (Guth, 1996: 89-125). One might be tempted here to make the comparison with the École des Beaux-Arts, both were government controlled schools producing government-approved art.

As a way of regulating the pressure felt by such a controlled social environment districts known as 'pleasure quarters' evolved within Japan's major cities of Edo, Kyoto and Osaka whereby although the shogunate sustained a close awareness of the activity within these quarters the districts themselves were, by Tokugawa standards, relatively autonomous. These 'pleasure quarters' were known as Yoshiwara in Edo, Shimabara in Kyoto and Shinmachi in Osaka. The term *ukiyo* was applied to these three districts; it translated as 'floating world' and referred to the world of transient pleasures to be enjoyed within these districts. Pleasures which, like snow or cherry-blossom, gratify the senses but only for the briefest of moments of their existence. Traditionally the term *ukiyo* possessed negative connotations since pleasure and transience were seen as the counter-signs to the seriousness of mind and purpose espoused by Zen Buddhism and

Neo-Confucianism. Gradually, however, the term acquired a more positive association with the excitement of a world in a constant flux (Varley, 2000: 182-183).

It was within these pleasure districts that the art of *ukiyo-e* (literally 'pictures of the floating world') first began to flourish. These districts catered for a broad and developing middle-class market and became the locus for the development of rapidly burgeoning popular culture that was geared around entertainment in the form of *geisha* houses, *kabuki* theatres, restaurants and tea-shops. This new 'consumer culture' sponsored the development of *ukiyo-e*, a secular art created by the method of woodblock printing. The medium of woodblock printing was not new but had originated in a Buddhist context in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, during the Heian period, when Buddhist monks would print the name of Buddha repeatedly as a sign of devotion. In the early Edo period, however, the medium of woodblock printing developed very rapidly in the new urban context. The first illustrated volumes became available in approximately 1650. Catering primarily to those of a more literate disposition the popularity of the 'book' soon became apparent and thus the ratio of the written word to the printed image decreased to favour the production of a publication that was less saturated with text and more centred around the printed image allowing the stories told to be understood from the woodblock prints alone, thus making them accessible to those who could not yet read (Cawthorne, 1997: 9-10). There was a growing demand for images of beautiful women (*bijin-ga*), portraits of *kabuki* actors (*yakusha-e*), erotic themes (*shunga*) and, eventually, *yōkai*, the latter becoming popular as a reaction against the favouritism of the Tokugawa for Neo-Confucianism, which did not have the rich folklore of the supernatural like Buddhism.

One of the most important and significant print artists of the ghost story genre was Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861). With a father whose occupation was a silk dyer, Kuniyoshi grew up as part of the *chōnin* of Edo (Takeuchi, 1987: 5). The *chōnin*, despite being deemed the lowest members of society were simultaneously the most important. Consisting mainly of merchants, although with some artisans and craftsmen, the *chōnin* controlled the commodity and trade of the Edo district, making them the lifeblood of the city. This is significant as Kuniyoshi and his artworks would play an important part in the expression of social discontent towards the oppressive rule of the Tokugawa shogunate. Kuniyoshi's artistic career began at the age of fourteen after his artistic gifts

were noticed by Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825)<sup>6</sup>. From 1811 Kuniyoshi studied at the Toyokuni studio until 1814 when he received his professional signature Utagawa Kuniyoshi (prior to this Kuniyoshi had been known as Yanagida Yoshishaburō) (Robinson, 1961: 5).

Kuniyoshi's success was not immediate; his early prints consisted mostly of some book illustrations, *yakusha-e* or *surimono* (prints of scenes from popular theatre productions). It was later in his career, with his productions of hero and warrior prints (*musha-e*) when Kuniyoshi became a more established artist. Between c.1840 and 1850 Kuniyoshi produced three triptych prints on the historical legends of the ghosts of the house of Taira<sup>7</sup> and Yoshitsune<sup>8</sup> (Robinson, 1961: 6-7). One of these may be the print *The Taira Ghosts Attacking Yoshitsune's Ship*, 1843-1845, which depicts the ghosts of those members of the Taira house that were drowned during their final defeat at the hands of Minamoto Yoshitsune, rising to attack Yoshitsune's ship during a storm (Pls. 5a-d).

Kuniyoshi's production of *musha-e* continued over the next few years and in 1827 he started the series *Tsūzoku suikoden gōketsu hyakuhachinin* (*One Hundred and Eight Heroes of the Popular Suikoden*). Taken from the 1805 Chinese Ming story of a group of outlaws fighting against the restrictions of an imposing government; this was a subject that many of Kuniyoshi's contemporaries could relate to (Takeuchi, 1987: 6). The popularity of Kuniyoshi was cemented from this point because of the political popularity of his warrior and associated demon prints at a time when the social frustrations in Edo peaked as a result of increasing social control by the Tokugawa shogunate. Melinda Takeuchi, for example, regards Kuniyoshi's print *Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider*, 1843 (Pls. 6a-d) as a satirical reflection on the Tempō Reforms<sup>9</sup>. The print is a triptych print compositionally divided into two halves: five human figures, one sleeping and four drinking tea or playing a game in the foreground and a plethora of supernatural beings dominated by a giant spider in the background. Takeuchi suggests that Kuniyoshi has alluded to two Japanese tales within this print. The first being from the Muromachi period (1333-1573) legend *Tsuchigumo soshiai* (Tale of the Earth Spider) which tells of the *samurai* warrior Minamoto Raikō (948-1012), forced by the Earth Spider into an enchanted sleep, and his four *Shitennō* (retainers): Sakata Kintokian (c.1000), Usui Sadamitsuam (954-1021), Urabe Suetakeak (950-1022) and Watanabe Tsunaal (954-1024) oblivious to the impending ambush and intended kidnapping by an army of

supernatural creatures, captained by the malevolent Earth Spider<sup>10</sup>. The second legend being referenced by Kuniyoshi, according to Takeuchi, is the Japanese myth *hyakki yakō* (The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons) (Takeuchi, 1987: 7-8). *Hyakki yakō*, or *Hyakki yagyō*, is the superstition that one night a month, in differing locations throughout Japan, all forms of *yōkai*, commanded by *nozuchi*, *nurarihyon* and *otoroshi* (see Appendix II, Chapter I), parade as one through the streets of Japan (Meyer, 2012: 218).

The Tempō Reforms were a reaction by the Tokugawa shogunate to the increased decadence of society, especially within districts such as Edo. In a bid to control the impact of the instability of the Japanese economy and social structure at the time, the Tempō Reforms sought to reduce the opulence within society yet they managed to achieve entirely the opposite result. Without consumers the artisans and merchants suffered and many had to relocate to outside the city. This created a sense of hostility towards the government and artists like Kuniyoshi provided a covert means by which these frustrations could be expressed. Takeuchi argues that the spider in this particular print represents the shogun and the web, the suffocating network of reforms that he introduced (Takeuchi, 1987: 6). Established ghost narratives, therefore, offered artists such as Kuniyoshi an allegorical vehicle by which the contemporary policies of the shogunate could be opposed. Subtlety was key as more than once Kuniyoshi was fined for not adhering to the strict rules pertaining to acceptable print subjects<sup>11</sup> (Takeuchi, 1987: 13).

Kuniyoshi was not the first artist to employ forms of allegory in his work as a means of expressing political dissent. Ukita Ikkei (1795-1859), an artist with strong monarchist sympathies and an avid campaigner against the rule of the Tokugawa, had already produced a hanging scroll in ink of a spider in its web entitled *The Web of Government* (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) (Pl. 7) (Takeuchi, 1987: 13; 33). Three diaries, authors unknown but written at the time of the print's release and identified by Takeuchi as *Fujiokaya nikki*, *Tempō zakki* and *Ukiyo no arisama*, had between them assigned individual demons within the composition of the print as being representative of certain governmental officials: for example Raikō was taken to represent Ieyoshi the first Tokugawa shogun; Mizuno Tadakuni, the instigator of the Tempō Reforms, was said to be represented by one of Raikō's retainers, playing the game *go*, ignorant of the approaching demonic

congregation which were supposed to portray the increasingly dissatisfied populace affected by Mizuno Tadakuni's Tempō Reforms (Takeuchi, 1987: 13-14).

Kuniyoshi had a powerful passion for violence, especially historical violence, and owing to the introduction of the Tempō Reforms in 1842 (*Tempō no kaikaku*) (Robinson, 1961: 13) prohibiting the production of *bijin-ga* and *yakusha-e*, Kuniyoshi was able to channel this enthusiasm through his art by flooding the market with prints based on the morbid or the ghoulish (Stevenson, 1983: 10). Prints depicting past heroes and warriors also became a popular substitute, possibly in order to humiliate the *samurai* of the day, emphasising that they no longer upheld the warrior status that they once had (Takeuchi, 1987: 6).

The influence of Kuniyoshi and the distinctive print tradition which he established can best be seen in the work of his pupil Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892), born in Edo on the 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1839 as Yonejiro Yoshitoshi. He adopted the name Tsukioka, as a child, when he maintained that he was descended from the Tsukioka Settei, a famous Osaka painter (Stevenson, 1983: 15-16). The name Yoshitoshi was given to him by Kuniyoshi in keeping with the tradition of the *ukiyo-e* master assigning each apprentice with a professional signature<sup>12</sup>. Allegedly Yoshitoshi's first signed print was a *nishiki-e* (a print using 12 or more colours) titled *Bunji gannen heike ni icimon bokaichu ichiru* (*In 1185 the Heike Clan Sank into the Sea and Perished*) (1843), printed when he was just 14 years old. All of Yoshitoshi's early professional works (from c.1858) were signed Ikkaisai Yoshitoshi until his breakdown in 1872-73, after this he assumed the artistic identity of Taiso Yoshitoshi, which meant 'Great Resurrection' (Keyes, 1980: 11).

Yoshitoshi began his printing career by primarily producing *yakusha-e* during 1859-c.1861. By 1862 he had begun to prefer *musha-e* (warrior prints) and using subjects such as the Gempei wars and the battles of Takedo Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin, as inspiration for his works (Keyes, 1980: 10-15). From 1863 to 1864 his prints took on a more historical focus (*haishi-e*: prints with an historical subject matter) and in 1865 the journal *Edo Saiseiki* declared him to be among the top ten contemporary *ukiyo-e* artists (Keyes, 1980: 10-15). Yoshitoshi's work, like his master Kuniyoshi's, reflected upon the political and economic mood of Japan at the time; in the late 1860s Japan found itself at the end of the Edo period and the unravelling of the control of the Tokugawa shogun

with the country experiencing an economic crisis that created social instability and political unrest. Acts of violence and crime within society were on the increase and this was reflected within the arts through Kabuki theatre and prints produced. Yoshitoshi's penchant for all things violent meant that he could capitalise on this state of unease and between 1886 and 1889 he produced a series of prints entitled *One Hundred Warriors in Battle* and, with another artist Yoshiiku who also studied under Kuniyoshi: *Eimeinijūhasshūku* (*Twenty-eight Famous Murders with Poems*) (Pl. 8) (Keyes, 1980: 101-5). In 1874 and 1875 Yoshitoshi began to produce *nishiki-e* for the publications *MeiyoShimbun* (*Illustrious Newspaper*) and *YūbinHōchiShimbun* (*The Postal News*) respectively and in 1882 *EirijiyūShimbun* (*Illustrated Free Newspaper*) asked him to produce prints for their special supplements (Keyes, 1980: 10-15).

Yoshitoshi, however, was working at a time of dramatic social, political and cultural upheaval in Japan. In 1868 the Tokugawa Shogunate finally fell from power as a result of both internal and external forces. The Imperial family were restored to power, Japan ended its policy of isolation, opened its borders to the West and began to modernise. The Meiji restoration, however, created its own stresses and pressures at every level: social, political, economic and cultural. The feudal system which had remained in place throughout the shogunate was abandoned by 1871 in favour of an administrative approach to agriculture. This created social tensions since the *peasant class* who, traditionally, were bound to their *samurai* overlords were no longer tied to the land or to their masters. During the Meiji restoration the *samurai* increasingly faced financial strain due to the struggling agricultural economy and the loosening of legal and social control over the peasants. The *samurai* class had, perhaps, most to lose from the Meiji restoration: a loss of power, wealth and social status and they broadly opposed the revolutionary processes that the Restoration set in motion. In addition, many people were unwilling to embrace radical change and the rapid impact of Western culture and of a Western presence in Japan put enormous stresses and strains on a society that had changed little over the course of 300 years. Indeed, the new National Army, formed in 1872, was called upon to suppress several insurgencies. During the 1870s Japan increasingly adopted the cultural forms, political systems and scientific and technological advancements of the West. In response to this abrupt transformation there was a cultural reversal in the 1880s where society once again began to favour

Japanese traditions over the innovations of Western industrialism (afe.easia.columbia.edu).

It is against this context that we might read one of the most dramatic of Yoshitoshi's ghost prints: *The Hag of Adachigahara*, 1885<sup>13</sup> (Pl. 9). The print depicts a story in which a pregnant woman has been captured by an old mountain hag. The victim is bound, gagged and suspended by her ankles from the ceiling of the hag's hut while the hag crouches nearby, sharpening a knife in preparation for the removal of the liver from the foetus. We witness the story just before the twist is revealed, that the pregnant woman is the daughter of the old woman, left behind when the old nanny was sent in search of a cure (the liver of a unborn baby) for the young mute girl she was charged with looking after (www.matthewmeyer.net). Taking into consideration the tensions in Japanese society that pertained at time of the print's creation, between old and new, repression and liberation, tradition and modernisation, we may read *The Hag of Adachigahara* by Yoshitoshi as an allegorical reflection upon the unrest in the Japan of his own day, in which the young, pregnant woman may represent the forces of modernity at work in Japanese society whilst the hag stands as a powerful sign for the inflexibility of tradition: the present held hostage both literally and metaphorically by the past.

Sara Sumpter makes a similar comparison in her essay "Katsushika Hokusai's Ghost of Kohada Koheiji: Image from a Fallen Era" where she identifies the ghost print *Kohada Koheiji*, c.1830 (Pl. 10) from the series *Hyaku Monogatari* by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) as a reflection upon the degradation of society under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate; the subjugation by the ruling *samurai* class of the lower farmer, artisan and *chōnin* classes and the oppression felt as the result of such a social structure:

"Kohada Koheiji is no longer just the ghost of a man wrongly killed, seeking his much deserved justice. He represents the deadening existence that plagued the commoner classes of the Edo period. As he peers through the netting of his victims' tent, the unseen antagonists become not just Koheiji's victims, but the victims of the Tokugawa government - a mass of nameless protagonists persecuted by grim reforms and restrictions." (Sumpter, 2006: 69).

It is evident therefore that the supernatural is an intrinsic part of Japanese culture, evolving from being used as an oral guide for morality before the use of the written word to becoming part of Japanese traditions through religion by being incorporated

into Shintō and Buddhism. The way in which these tales and creatures of Japanese folklore are embedded within the culture of Japan is the main difference between the Western approach to the supernatural and the Japanese approach to the supernatural. As has been noted a Western ghost story focuses upon the human character, whereas the Japanese ghost story focuses upon the ghost; similarly the Western ghost is a much more passive creature compared to the aggressive and impassioned characteristics of *yōkai* such as *yūrei* or *rokuro-kubi*. Such *yōkai* and folklore stories about the *yōkai* were also used as a source of inspiration by artists of the Edo, or Tokugawa, period through which to express their views about the Tokugawa shogunate and the restrictive social strictures of the time. The Tokugawa rule brought with it a prolonged period of peace during which the samurai had to adjust to being administrators rather than warriors. The social tensions that these changes fostered were eased by the development of the *ukiyo* districts within the new urban centres of Tokugawa Japan and through the evolution of the *ukiyo-e* which initially promoted this new-found popular culture of pleasure and enjoyment (at least for some). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the ghost print provided artists with an allegorical means by which to satirise the Tokugawa regime and to critique its strict reforms. Due to the regulations and eventual prohibition of prints on the themes of *bijin-ga* and *shunga*, print artists sought inspiration from other subjects such as historical accounts and stories of the supernatural. Depicting scenes of past battles, whether true or mythological, and the folklore of the *yōkai* became a preferred source for the artist-printmakers, offering them a potent means by which they could express political opposition with impunity. Both before and after the Meiji Restoration, the traditional ghost narratives of Japan, which found their origins in the most archaic of times, were vividly brought back to life by printmakers to reflect upon the most contemporary of events. What those of different cultures might make of this tradition and the unusual pictorial resolutions that it yielded was to be a very different story.

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1. *Sarayashiki Okiku no rei (The Ghost of Okiku at Sarayashiki)*

There are several versions of this Japanese tale. The constants to the story are Okiku being the servant girl of the *samurai* Aoyama Tessan and the ten valuable porcelain plates in his possession which are either family heirlooms or have been entrusted to him by Dutch merchants, one of which becomes broken or lost. One version suggests that the plate was broken by the wife of Aoyama, who blames Okiku. Another suggests that Aoyama hides one of the plates himself after his advances towards Okiku are rejected, his plan being to offer to forgive the loss when she cannot produce all ten plates if she will consent to becoming his mistress. Okiku is then either imprisoned and abused by Aoyama, in the case of the former version of the story where, after escaping she commits suicide by



drowning herself in the well, or she is killed by Aoyama for her continued rejection of his advances, whereupon her body is disposed of in the well, in the case of the latter (Stevenson, 1983: 52).

2. *Yotsuya kaidan (The Yotsuya Ghost Story) or The Story of Oiwa*, by Tsuruya Nanboku, 1825.  
This story is about a beautiful woman, Oiwa, who was married to a former samurai, Iyemon; together they had a son. Iyemon was himself a handsome man and soon the daughter, Oume, of a wealthy neighbour fell in love with him. Oume's father was a doctor and he gave Iyemon a poison, disguised as a potion for Oiwa who was still weak from the birth of her son. The poison however, instead of killing Oiwa, disfigured her beautiful face, causing the protrusion of one of her eyes giving her a monstrous visage. Iyemon was horrified and abandoned Oiwa; he was persuaded by his neighbour to marry Oume but was too cowardly to ask Oiwa for a divorce and so instead began to abuse her hoping to drive her away. Oiwa, out of despair, committed suicide; Iyemon also killed Kohei, the loyal servant of Oiwa, who blamed Iyemon for his cruel behaviour. Iyemon attached both bodies to a raft and disposed of them into the river nearby.

Iyemon subsequently married Oume but upon removing his new bride's veil he saw instead Oiwa's distorted features. In a panic he killed his new bride and, mistaking his new father-in-law for Kohei, killed him also as he escaped. Iyemon ran to the river whereupon he perceived the bodies of Oiwa and Kohei upon the raft and imagined that they were calling out to him. Iyemon then drowned himself in the river (Stevenson, 1983: 88).

3. As a result of calendar changes with the introduction of the Meiji era (c.1868) from the lunar calendar to the Gregorian calendar (the calendar we use today), the date of the *Obon* festival does somewhat vary region to region. In the Kantō region of eastern Japan it is known as the *Shichigatsu Bon* and is held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July; in the northern quarters of the Kantō region, the Chūgoku and Shikoku regions and the Islands of Ryukyu it is known as the *Kyu Bon* (Old Bon) and it falls during the seventh month, on the fifteenth date owing to the still reigning lunar calendar. However the majority of Japan recognises the *Hachigatsu Bon* which is the Bon celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. It is believed that the *Obon* is derived from the story of Mokuren who, being possessed of supernatural talents, discovered that the spirit of his mother was suffering among the *Gaki* (ghosts afflicted with a voracious hunger for a particularly vile or degrading substance due to jealous behaviours displayed while alive). Being a disciple of the Buddha Mokuren told the Buddha of the plight of the spirit of his deceased mother and was told he should make offerings to the Buddhist monks upon the conclusion of their summer retreat, which occurred on the fifteenth date of the seventh month according to the lunar calendar. The dance performed by Mokuren to celebrate the deliverance of his mother's spirit from the *Gaki* evolved into the *Obon dori* ([www.bs.u.edu](http://www.bs.u.edu)).
4. The Edo period (1615-1868) is so named predominantly because of the shogun Ieyasu (1543-1616), the first Tokugawa shogun, deciding on the area of Edo to be the established headquarters from which the Tokugawa shogunate would rule; transforming it from a relatively sedate *Jōkoma-chi* (castle town) into a culturally rich city, thriving on importation from Kyoto and Osaka (Guth, 1996: 89-125). In conjunction with the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate there existed a prolonged period of peace rendering the martial arts skills of the dominant Samurai class essentially obsolete. In order to retain their position of dominance within the social structure, and to remain in employment, the samurai had to fall back on their skills in the decorative arts. Predominantly originating from the more affluent families of society, Samurai warriors would have been taught the arts of painting, calligraphy, lacquer work and similar artistic professions which they exploited, becoming masters of the decorative rather than martial arts. To be skilled in these arts was a coveted position to hold within Japanese society and something that was ultimately attainable on some level to every member of society, regardless of social stature therefore being able to pass on this knowledge allowed the Samurai to remain necessary denizens of the Japanese social structure (Guth, 1996: 21-49).
5. The hierarchical pyramid of Japanese society began with the *samurai* class towards the higher end (directly under the *daimyo* [domain lords] then the shogun), followed by farmers and artisans with merchants at the bottom due to their lack of a positive or constructive contribution towards society in general. These lower level individuals made up a section of society known as the *chōnin*. However this did not mean that the *chōnin* lacked power or authority, on the contrary the pleasure districts (Edo and Kyoto) of the larger cities were their domain. Despite the shogunate's control over the production of official art, it could not control the artistic preferences of these merchants or artisans and it was from those of a less conformist attitude towards art that the *chōnin* gained their wealth (Guth, 1996: 21-49).

6. Interestingly it was a drawing by Kuniyoshi of the Demon-queller Shō that caught Toyokuni's attention and caused Kuniyoshi's subsequent admission into the Toyokuni studio (Robinson, 1961: 5).
7. During the Heian period (794-1185) true control of Japan lay, not in the hands of the emperor, but with the Fujiwara family. As a result of internal feuding in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Fujiwara family lost this control and the house of Taira (known also as Heike) gained power over the opposing Minamoto (known also as Genji) family (the houses of Taira and Minamoto had been employed by each of the two quarrelling sides of the Fujiwara family, due to both the Taira and Minamoto holding positions as leading military houses). However in 1185 the Minamoto defeated the house of Taira during a battle at sea in the Shimonseki Straits (pl. 3a-d) (Storry, 1960: 38).
8. Yoshitsune was the younger sibling of Yoritomo, the leader of the house of Minamoto at the time of their triumph over the Taira family. It was Yoshitsune that led the winning battle in the Shimonoseki Straits in 1185. Eventually however Yoritomo had Yoshitsune killed out of jealousy (Storry, 1960: 39).
9. 'Earth Spider', also known as a *Tsuchi-gumo*\*  
(\*see Appendix II, Chapter I)
10. *Minamoto no Yorimitsu tsuchigumo o kiru zu* (*Minamoto no Yorimitsu Striking at the Ground Spider*). Raikō, delirious with a fever, believed that he was under attack from demons and so his four chief retainers, including Watanabe, came to protect him, at his bedside. Unfortunately each retainer fell asleep, whereupon the 'Earth Spider' did appear and tried to bind Raikō with a rope. Raikō, although weakened from his illness, managed to draw his sword and strike the demon, frightening it away. Watanabe and the other retainers awoke and discovered the demon by following its blood trail to Kitano, north of Kyoto, where it was hiding in a mound of earth; Watanabe killed the creature with an uprooted tree trunk. Raikō's fever instantly subsided. His sword was given the name *Kumokirimaru*, or Spider Cutter." (Stevenson, 1983: 82).
11. Part of the Tempō Reforms included the addition of a censor's seal to every print published. This was eventually increased to two censors' seals in 1847. Kuniyoshi was fined after the production of 'Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider' and the blocks for this print were removed by the authorities. However evidence suggests that not all of the blocks were successfully seized. There remain two editions of the triptych: one which bears Kuniyoshi's signature on only one of the three sheets and one edition where Kuniyoshi's signature is apparent on all three sheets. Also there are prints in existence that are devoid of the mandatory censors' seal (Robinson, 1961: 14).
12. Kuniyoshi's students all had names that began 'Yoshi' mimicking the latter half of his own name. An artist's secondary name (Ikkaisai in the case of Yoshitoshi) was chosen by the student and was usually inspired by the secondary or signature name of their master (Ichiyusai for Kuniyoshi) (Keyes, 1980: 16). In the same way Kuniyoshi, born Yanagiya Yoshisaburō, became Utagawa Kuniyoshi after studying under Utagawa Toyouni (Robinson, 1961: 5).
13. The Hag of Adachigahara is a story about the *yōkai* known as a *yama-uba*\*, or *Onibaba*, which is a mountain hag. The story tells that there was once a couple with a mute for a daughter. When the child was still young, no more than five years of age, the parents heard tell of a cure: if their daughter was fed the fresh liver of an unborn baby she would begin to speak. The couple enlisted the help of the child's nanny to seek out this cure; before setting out on her journey the nanny gave her own daughter a charm, to protect her while she was away. The nanny searched for this cure for many months which turned into years. She ended her journey in the moors of a place called Adachigahara where she waited in a hut (or sometimes it is a cave), just off the roadside, for a passing pregnant woman. More years passed until eventually a pregnant woman travelled by the old nanny's hut. The old woman captured the pregnant woman and killed her for the liver of her unborn child. Only after the pregnant woman is dead does the old nanny notice the same protection charm that she gave her own daughter at the start of her journey. Driven insane with the grief of killing her own daughter the nanny is transformed into a *yōkai*, a *yama-uba* or *onibaba* known as the Hag of Adachigahara who continued to capture, kill and eat travellers that passed by her dwelling place ([www.matthewmeyer.net](http://www.matthewmeyer.net)).  
(\*see Appendix II, Chapter I)

## **Chapter II**

### **The Arrival and Dissemination of Japanese Art And *Yōkai* Prints in Western Europe**

The arrival and dissemination of Japanese prints and other *objets d'art* has been the subject of extensive academic research in recent years. Scholars such as Dufwa (1981), Berger (1992), Wichmann (1999), Lambourne (2007), to name but a few, have established the means by which artists in both Britain and continental Europe encountered the prints. This chapter, therefore, will limit itself to the briefest overview of the means by which Japanese prints came to the West. It will, however, engage with the context of dissemination before the fall of the Tokugawa regime and, whilst reviewing the reception of Japanese prints in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, will explore the wider currency of knowledge on Japanese artists available to artists at this time. Within this broad context the availability of *yōkai* prints as a specific genre will be discussed.

The vogue for *japonaiserie* in the West is mostly discussed as occurring after Japan's period of isolation during the Tokugawa period, when Japan once again opened its doors to trade with the rest of the world, from c.1868 onwards. At this time Japanese woodblock prints and *objets d'art*, as well as the writings of travellers such as Lafcadio Hearn made it across to artists and collectors in Europe and America, influencing artists from Van Gogh and Edgar Degas to Aubrey Beardsley and Odilon Redon. However one should also consider the importation and exportation of goods that occurred *before* Japan's period of isolation; which of those artists that were at work pre-1860 could have been influenced by Japanese culture and how might these artists have been influenced?

During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries there was a developing trade culture within Japan; contact with China became more significant as trade between the two countries increased. Up until the 14<sup>th</sup> century rice had been the predominant mode of commerce for trade however money had begun, increasingly, to replace rice. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Japanese had started exporting their own goods, such as screens, fans and even swords in exchange for copper money that had been introduced by China. It is also documented that, as early as c.1542, there was European contact with Japan in the form of a Portuguese ship running ashore near Kyushu, due to an accidental wind. This was

closely followed by the Portuguese Jesuit Christian missionary Francis Xavier (1506-1552) in c.1549 (Storry, 1960: 43-44). This trade channel with the Portuguese and the acceptance by the Japanese of Christians within their society lasted for approximately fifty years; and in c.1600 Will Adams arrived in Japan from London with a Dutch trade ship. It is believed that Adams was the first Englishman to see Japan (Storry, 1960: 61).

Three of the most notable *daimyo* of Japan's feudal period were Oda Nobunga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (or Ieyoshi) (1542-1616). Ieyasu, because of his belonging to the house of Minamoto<sup>1</sup>, became the first of the Tokugawa shoguns, in c.1603. Ieyasu and Adams became close allies and Ieyasu promoted Adams to the position of diplomatic agent once trade between the English and the Dutch had been firmly established with Japan. Trading between the Japanese and the English lasted from c.1613-1623. Trade with the Dutch began slightly earlier (c.1609) and continued on, albeit in a highly restricted fashion, throughout the Tokugawa rule, despite Japan's policy of isolation (Storry, 1960: 61-62). This policy was adopted by the Tokugawa shogunate, in a bid to protect the traditions of Japan being infiltrated by Western ideals, with the exception of the Dutch United East India Company. The Dutch were allowed to continue to trade with Japan out of the port of Nagasaki, a significant historical point when considering the influence of Japanese art over Dutch Symbolism.

The *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (the Dutch United East India Company), or the VOC was founded in 1602 and was one of, if not the, most successful trading companies of its time. The VOC's main competitor was the English East India Company, or the EIC, formed in 1600 in London however at this time the EIC was not nearly powerful or affluent enough to be able to compete to the standard of the VOC until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The VOC, being a governmental military entity as well as a trading establishment took control of Batvia (known as Jaccatra at the time) in Java, making it the administrative capital and permanent base for the VOC from where trade ships would set sail and dock for repair (Niemeijer, 2007: 61).

Such rich trading links as these are an indication that the Dutch had regular access to Japanese goods, which would have included Japanese art works and Japanese artefacts. An interesting comparison can be found in the archives of the Rijksmuseum where in

their collection there is a gold coin, made in Batavia, c.1690 but stamped with four Japanese characters as well as the Holland coat of arms, and in contrast there is a Japanese *netsuke* (see Appendix II, Chapter I), made in Japan, c.1700-1800 carved out of wood in the likeness of a Dutch woman or a Dutch man, carrying a small child ([www.rijksmuseum.nl](http://www.rijksmuseum.nl)). These examples of the cross-cultural influence demonstrates just how strong those trade links were as early as the late 17<sup>th</sup> and possibly early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

We may conclude that Japanese art and information concerning Japan and its culture had been filtering through to the West much earlier than may have been previously suspected. Evidence of this can be seen in the collections of the British Museum. Within their collection archive is a print by a German artist, Michael Manger (1570-1603) illustrating the arrival of Japanese ambassadors in Milan following a visit to Japan as early as 1586 (Pl. 11) ([www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org) [Manger]). This proves that there was travel between Japan and Europe at Europe at this time. There is also clear evidence of *japonaiserie* in European art at this time in an etching by a British artist William Sharp (1749-1824), who included a Japanese screen in his etching *The Scruple* described as thus: "Illustration to Marmontel's 'Moral Tales', Vol I; a young man falling impulsively on his knees, reaching forward to embrace a young woman who sits opposite him in an arm-chair, throwing up her arms in dismay, with a japanese [*sic*] screen in the background to left, 1781" (Pl. 12) ([www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org) [Sharp]). In addition, we have clear evidence of the existence of collectors of Japanese art from this pre-Restoration period. An important 17<sup>th</sup> century collector of Japanese art was Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1715), a German physician who had published literature about Japanese culture (Kaempfer 1727-1728 & 1777-1779) and had amassed a collection of Japanese objects during his time in Japan attending as physician to the Dutch at their island trading port at Dejima in Nagasaki. Part of Kaempfer's collection was eventually acquired by the British Museum upon its founding in 1753 via the collection of Sir Hans Sloane (Irvine, 2013: 20-22).

Later in the 1850s, with the re-opening of trade between Japan and America in accordance with the Treaty of Kanagawa, and eventually the rest of the world, the West experienced an influx of Japanese goods, including *objets d'art* such as ceramics, lacquerware, metalware and prints which began the vogue for *japonaiserie*. Trade links

between Japan and Western Europe therefore existed both before and after 1868. According to Duret it was Chassiro in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century who was the first French 'explorer' of Japan. Chassiro visited Japan in 1861 and subsequently published his findings and illustrated his book with prints by Hokusai (Duret, 1900: i). It must have been around this time that the French art critic Philippe Burty (1830-1890), a founder member and contributor to the *Gazettes des Beaux-Arts*, began to collect Japanese prints which were subsequently exhibited in the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris. This exhibition proved to be of historic importance in turning the attention of the French artistic community, at least its more open-minded members, towards the expressive qualities of the prints. Théodore Duret dates his own interest in Japanese prints to his seeing the prints in Burty's collection on display in this exhibition (Duret, 1900: i).

These World Exhibitions, or World Fairs as they were also known, provided important venues for the dissemination of Japanese art and culture. London 1862 International Exposition, for example, featured a display of Japanese arts and crafts, known as the 'Japanese Court' organised by Sir (John) Rutherford Alcock (1809-1897) who was the first British consul-general in Japan, normally based in Edo but on leave in London from 1862 until 1864. Alcock himself was a collector of Japanese art and had his own exhibition in London in 1863 as well as being the author of several publications related to Japanese culture including *Art and Art Industry in Japan* (Alcock, 1878). The arts of Japan were also exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition held in Philadelphia in 1876. Bordes, in her essay on this exhibition, writes that this Centennial Exposition was the first of the World Exhibition in which the Japanese were able to assert their own presence at the fair, representing Japanese art rather than Japanese art being displayed by as opposed to, say, having their art displayed by a third party such as Alcock in the 1862 show (Bordes, 1975: 20). Subsequently Japanese and artefacts became staple exhibits at such fairs and exhibitions including the International Exhibitions in Paris of 1867, 1878 and 1889; and the 1876 *Centennial Exposition* in Philadelphia (Jackson, 2000: 101).

Burty initiated a trend for the collection of Japanese art, Japanese prints and, by extension, the Japanese ghost print. Enormous private collections were formed at this time by those involved with the visual arts in one way or another. Théodore Duret (1838-1927), for example, having seen the prints in Burty's collection, visited Japan with his friend the collector Cernuschi in 1871-1872. It was at this time that Duret

began collecting illustrated books and prints. In 1880 Duret met William Anderson, an English doctor, who had returned from a prolonged time in Japan with a large collection of prints and books. Collectors such as these subsequently turned academics and began to research and catalogue the tradition of *ukiyo-e*. Duret, for example, wrote on the subject of Hokusai for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (Duret, 1882) and by 1900 had donated his collection of 581 illustrated books, which included Buddhist texts, and books illustrated by scores of well-known Japanese artists as well as Hokusai's *manga* to the Bibliothèque Nationale. Some of these works included *yōkai* images, one of which, a Hokusai print of *Yorimitsu and the Earth Spider* was published in the catalogue to the collection (Pl. 13) (Duret, 1900: 195-196).

Charles Gillot (1853-1903), the famous printmaker, was another major 19<sup>th</sup> century collector of Japanese art and Japanese prints. His collection, totalling 3,453 lots of Asian art, was catalogued and sold just months after his death in 1904 by Durand-Ruel. Of these, 1,314 lots comprised individual prints and illustrated books. The catalogue of the sale shows that amongst his collection were several illustrated books of ghost stories such as Katsukawa Shunyei's *Apparitions of a Hundred Monsters* (*Kouaïdan hiyak'ki dzuyé*) (Pl. 14) (Gillot, 1904: 50, no. 391) and *Oiwa: The Lantern Ghost* from the series *Hyaku Monogatari* by Hokusai (Pl. 3b) (Gillot, 1904: 126, no. 1034d), both of which were illustrated in the catalogue. Charles Gillot was very friendly with the Swiss artist Eugène Grasset (1845-1917), who illustrated his publications and designed furniture for him, and the Art Nouveau jewellery designer Henri Vever (1854-1942) both of whom shared his passion for Japanese art. As early as the 1880s Gillot published a picture book of Japanese art including a drawing by Hokusai of *gaki* grasping for food out of reach and *The Temptation of Buddha* by Hokusai (Pl. 15) (Gillot, 1880s: pls. 260 and 233 respectively).

Pierre Barbouteau (1862-1916) was another well-known collector of Japanese prints and *objets d'art*. His collection comprised nearly 600 Japanese prints and drawings alone including a number of *yōkai* images. Notable works included 11 original sketches by Kunisada of 'monstrous and erotic ghosts' and a further 30 designs by the artist on the theme of monstrous apparitions (Barbouteau, 1904: 68-70, grouped as nos. 215-216). In 1904 Barbouteau sold his collection. An annotated copy of the sale catalogue, now in the Smithsonian Libraries, shows that two of the main purchasers of the *yōkai*

works were Henri Vever and Samuel Bing (1838-1905), the art dealer and collector who not only sponsored the vogue for *japonisme* but later promoted the cause of Art Nouveau, hence demonstrating the collectability and marketability of the genre at this point in time. Also included in the Barbouteau Collection and available for sale were one complete set and four individual prints from Hokusai's *Hyaku Monogatari* (Barbouteau, 1904: 123, grouped as nos. 650-651).

Many other collectors at this time were hard at work amassing enormous collections of Japanese prints. Charles-Édouard Haviland (1839-1921), the Limoges porcelain manufacturer, is worthy of note as are Émile Javal (1839-1907), the famous French ophthalmologist, whose collection was sold in 1926 (Javal 1926) and Alexis Rouart (1839-1911) who collected Japanese prints and began donating portions of his collection to the Bibliothèque Nationale from 1902 onwards. The writer, art critic and publisher Édmond de Goncourt (1822-1896) possessed a collection of nearly 300 Japanese prints including *yōkai* works such as an Utamaro of two phantoms appearing before a group of terrified young people (Goncourt, 1897: lot 1325). The art historian and editor of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Louis Gonse (1846-1921), collected Japanese prints and sold many of them in 1904. All these collections and many others both in Paris and beyond, such as that of Alexander Georg Mosle (1796-1870) in Leipzig, contained examples of *yōkai* prints which demonstrates the availability and popularity of the works at least in collecting circles.

It was Henri Vever one of the main purchasers of the Barbouteau Collection who dominated the collecting field in Japanese prints in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century France. His collection of *ukiyo-e* numbered in the thousands and was referenced and illustrated in publications on Japanese art including those by Seidlitz (1897) and Migeon (1905 & 1923) amongst others. Vever's collection was so extensive that during the 1920s approximately eight thousand woodcut prints were bought by the collector Matsukata Kōjirō (1865-1950) who established the Matsukata Collection that eventually formed the basis of The National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo, although the collection of prints formerly belonging to Vever currently reside within the collection of the Tokyo National Museum ([www.nmwa.go.jp](http://www.nmwa.go.jp)). The remainder of Vever's *ukiyo-e* collection, when it finally came up for sale at Sotheby's, during 1974-1975 totalled nearly 1,000 items<sup>2</sup> (Hillier, 1976). Further works from his collection subsequently



came to auction in 1977 and 1997<sup>3</sup>. The significance of this collection cannot be underestimated since Vever entertained a very open policy in respect of it, showing the prints to his friends and fellow collectors as well as lending them as illustrations for the academic literature. We know with certainty that his collection contained a number of important ghost prints. Hillier, for example, catalogued the five well-known Hokusai prints for *Hyaku Monogatari* including *Okiku* (Pl. 1), *Shunen* (Pl. 2), *Oiwa San* (Pl. 3a), *Kohada Koehiji* (Pl. 10) and *Warai Hannya* (Pl. 80) (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 3: 742-751). We do not know exactly when these works entered Vever's collection, they may have bought from the Barbouteau sale in 1904 (the catalogue does not specify the purchaser for the Hokusai works) or have been pre-existent in his collection, but their existence testifies to his interest in the ghost genre and his desire to collect them.

Hillier catalogues other *yōkai* works in Vever's collection including a splendid image of a ghost appearing from an incense burner dating from 1765 (pl. 16) which he acquired from the Collection of Havilland in 1922. We know that this specific print had a currency in artistic circles in France before this time since the work was exhibited in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1910 and reproduced in the catalogue (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 1: 156). Other important works included a print by Ippitsusai Buncho on the subject of *Tsuna no Watanabe holding the Arm of the Oni of the Rashomon Gate* (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 1: 233), an image by Sharaku of *Shoki the Demon Queller with two Oni* (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 2: 620) and a Toyokuni print of the actor *Onoe Matsusuke I playing the role of Kohada Koheiji* (pl. 17) (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 2: 742). Other images that are worth noting include a Kuniyoshi triptych of *The Ghosts of Shin Chunagon Tomomori and his Followers at the Bottom of the Sea* (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 3: 860-861), one of *Minamoto Yorimitsu and the Earth Spider*<sup>4</sup> (Pl. 6) (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 3: 862-863) and a Kuniyoshi print of *The Fox Woman with Nine Tails* (Pl. 89) (Hillier, 1976, Vol. 3: 868).

Collectors such as those described above sometimes acquired their prints from making personal visits to Japan (Duret for example) but more often than not they purchased them from art dealers. Such was the vogue for things Japanese that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century specialist dealers began to appear in their dozens and not only in Paris but in the other capital cities of Europe from London to Moscow. The first known dealers of Japanese art in Paris included the shop *La Porte Chinoise* and the *L'empire chinois* both of which operated from separate premises on the Rue Vivienne between 1862-1886 and

1863-1885 respectively. These establishments were followed by those founded by M. and Mme. Desoye in the Rue de Rivoli from 1864-1888 and the Sichel brothers in the Rue Pigalle from 1878-1898 (Aitken & Delafond, 1983: 18). Duret records that Samuel Bing began to import Japanese prints for sale in 1883 (Duret, 1900: vii). In the 1880s and 1890s the number of dealers of Oriental art in Paris mushroomed. In addition to Bing who dominated the market, there was Mitsui in the Rue St. Georges (1880-1884), Mme. Langweil on the Boulevard des Italiens (1881-1904), *Au Bon Marché*, which retailed prints from its premises in the Rue Boucicault (1883-1902), Wakai and Hayashi, two Japanese importers who established premises in the Rue de la Victoire (1887-1902) and Mme. Hatty on the Rue Chateaudun (1890-1895). Apart from providing evidence of the increasing demand for Japanese prints and *objets d'art* this listing of dealerships is highly significant because it was first drawn up by the well-known *annuaire du commerce* Didot-Bottin and was compiled from a close study of artists' correspondence, in other words, these were the dealerships frequented by the painters of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Aitken & Delafond, 1983: 18).

The vogue for collecting and dealing in Japanese prints which swept Paris and other cities across Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century naturally attracted those who wanted to categorise, catalogue and study the prints from an academic point of view. Dilettante societies for the appreciation of Japanese prints were founded at this time such as the Société des amis de l'art japonais (1892-1930s) which organised eight dinners for its members every year at which Japanese art could be discussed and studied. Members included Édmond de Goncourt, Samuel Bing, the collectors Raymond Koechlin and Henri Vever and invitation cards to the dinners have been found in the archives of both Rodin and Monet (pl. 18). Raymond Koechlin in his memoirs writes that here

“people only ever talked about prints and the custom developed of each member bring along some examples for the admiration of his colleagues .... folder by folder we looked, went into ecstasies, emitting cries of enthusiasm and when, after midnight, it was time to leave, the conversation went on down the streets through which we ambled” (Koechlin, 1930: 21-23).

In addition, the publication of academic journals and studies devoted to the prints began to develop in the 1880s. Samuel Bing's monthly magazine *Le Japon Artistique* (Pl. 19) began publication in May 1888 and went through 35 issues until its demise in 1891. Early catalogues and academic studies into the prints began in Britain with Christopher Dresser's book *Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures* (Dresser, 1882) and in

France with Théodore Duret's "L'art japonais: Les livres illustrés. Les albums imprimés: Hokusai", which was published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (Duret, 1882). Other key academic works of the period included general overviews such as Charles Gillot's *Documents Japonais* comprising 260 plates of Japanese art objects including prints (Gillot, 1882), Louis Gonse's two volume book *L'Art Japonais* (Gonse, 1883b) as well as specific studies such as Édmond de Goncourt's treatise on Utamaro of 1891 (Goncourt, 1891) and catalogues of collections such as Duret's monumental catalogue of Japanese prints and books in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Duret, 1900). De Goncourt's study is particular interesting for the purpose of this dissertation since he pays particular attention in it to Utamaro's album *100 Fantastic Tales* and specifically describes one of the ghost prints in the series which depicts: "a room in which a *samurai* hides his head on the ground under the sleeves of his robe, at the sight of an apparition of two larvae, one in dark attire with parts of a skeleton piercing its wasted flesh the other with a skull with immense empty eye-sockets in which there are small dark dots and firing a bloodied tongue which darts from the hole of its mouth like a flame chased by the wind" (Goncourt, 1891: 226). This reference is significant because it shows that already, at the time of publication in 1891, albums of *yōkai* prints by Utamaro were circulating in artistic and literary circles. The vogue for Japanese prints was not limited to France and Britain. Across Europe academic studies on the subject were published such as Woldemar von Seidlitz's book *Geschichte des japanischen Farbenholzschnittes* published in Dresden in 1897 and translated into both English and French (Seidlitz, 1897, 1910 & 1914).

Significant exhibitions of Japanese art and particularly of prints did much to sponsor interest in the genre amongst artists and the wider public. In 1878 Tadamasa Hayashi organised the Japanese section at the Exposition Universelle. This did much to establish a popular appreciation of *ukiyo-e*. More significant perhaps was the enormous exhibition organised by Louis Gonse at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in 1883. The *Exposition Retrospective de l'Art Japonais* (pl. 20) (Gonse, 1883a) brought together over 3,200 Japanese prints and *objets d'art*. Exhibits were drawn from a variety of private collections: Samuel Bing lent 659 items, Philippe Burty over 300 items including *netsukes* of demons and 7 *manga* albums by Hokusai. Charles Ephrussi lent a collection of over 50 lacquer pieces, Louis Gonse himself showed over 1,100 exhibits including a Buddhist scroll, wooden masks of 'demons' (*oni* masks), *netsukes* of demons, and *manga*

albums plus a copy of Hokusai's *Hyaku Monogatari*. Théodore Duret lent 80 items including Hokusai prints and *manga* editions with remaining works coming from other private collections. The display of *netsuke* in the form of demons and monsters at this exhibition is particularly interesting since it identifies the existence of a discrete genre of 'demon' *netsuke* in French collections at this time. None of these were illustrated in the catalogue but we might presume that they were similar in appearance to the example of a 'demon' *netsuke* now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Pl. 21). The significance of this is that *yōkai* imagery permeated the visual arts of Japan and was not restricted to representation in the prints alone.

Avant-garde artists naturally formed a vibrant part of this vogue for things Japanese and for Japanese prints in particular. Much has been written about the impact of Japanese prints upon their work and upon the artists as collectors. We know already that Degas, Monet, Rodin, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Fantin-Latour, Gustave Moreau, Bonnard, Tissot, Whistler and many others collected these prints and were influenced by them. It is clear that *yōkai* works were appreciated, exhibited and published by the collector community in France in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century and that artists accessed these sources. Indeed, Garnier, in his essay on Rodin's collection of Japanese art, uses diaries and archival information in the Musée Rodin, to paint a compelling picture of at least one late 19<sup>th</sup> century artist who lived out his life, when not in the studio, in the ambience of collectors and dealers of Japanese art (Garnier, 2007). The question remains, however, as to whether any of these artists themselves appreciated and collected *yōkai* works in particular.

Many collections of prints owned by avant-garde artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century have long been dispersed. A few collections, however, are still extant either in complete or partial form. Rodin's collection is still intact in the archives of the Musée Rodin. We know that he possessed over 200 prints, books, albums and designs and that some of these were on *yōkai* themes such as the story of *Sumizone: The Spirit of the Flowering Cherry Tree* by Kunisada (Rodin, 2007: 35). Monet also possessed an extensive collection of prints and albums. Aitken and Delafond (1983) record 231 Japanese prints that hung in various rooms throughout Monet's house at Giverny. Monet's specific tastes revolved around the landscape prints of Hokusai and Hiroshige and the genre of *bijin-ga*. His collection, which still exists to this day at Giverny, did, however, contain

one interesting image, a print by Kunisada on the subject of Okabe metamorphosed into a cat<sup>5</sup> (Pl. 22). Although the triptych represents a scene from a *kabuki* play, the play itself deals with this ghostly transition. Further evidence of prints on the theme of spirits, demons and ghosts can be found in the collection of Van Gogh, which is now preserved in its entirety at the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam. Vincent Van Gogh initially acquired prints in Antwerp but subsequently purchased them from dealers such as Bing in Paris. In his collection were several prints that alluded to Japanese mythology or *yōkai* including a small *kakemono* (hanging scroll) of *Amaterasu coming out of the cave*, (Pl. 23) that illustrates Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess<sup>6</sup> emerging from a cave; and an *ōban, nishiki-e* (large print using twelve or more colours) triptych of *The sacrifice of Yojibei* which depicts the sailor Yojibei about to sacrifice himself to the gods of the sea in order to save the ship from being destroyed by a sea storm (van Rappard-Boon et al., 2006: 68, pl. 22; 249, pl.354). Prints that portray specific examples of *yōkai*, all of which are *ōban, nishiki-e* prints, include: two prints concerning the *Cat Witch of Okabe*<sup>5</sup> entitled *Kodera no byōkai-I (The horror cat story of the Old Temple)* and *Okabe* (Pl. 24); a print depicting the actor Onoe Baikō as a *yūrei* with a baby, often known as an *ubume*: *Onoe Baikō as a female ghost holding a baby* (Pl. 25); as well as one print illustrating *Umi-Bōzu*, the sea monk (see Appendix II, Chapter I): *Kuwana* (Pl. 26) (van Rappard-Boon et al., 2006: 113, pl. 118; 285, pl. 415; 138 pl. 151; 288, pl. 421). The two prints *Okabe* and *Kuwana* belong to a series of prints entitled *Tōkaidō gojusan-tsui (Fifty-three pairings along the Tōkaidō Road)* by Utagawa Kuniyoshi ([www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org) [Kuniyoshi]). Finally, although Gauguin's collection of prints was dispersed long ago, we do know that it contained *yōkai* works since one of these (Pl. 75) , which will be discussed below, features in his painting *Nature Morte á l'Estampe Japonaise* of 1889 (Pl. 74). Clearly, then, artists did collect this specific genre and made use of them in their work.

The ghost print had to wait for its very own full academic treatment until 1924 when Dr. Jean Vinchon (1884-1964) published his essay entitled "Fantômes japonais" (Vinchon, 1924). Vinchon was by profession a psychiatrist but his essay adopts a particularly strong resonance for the art historian because he was a close associate of the poet Guillaume Apollinaire and in the 1920s was closely associated with the Surrealist group<sup>7</sup>. In his essay he reviews the extent of knowledge in Paris regarding the ghost-print. Although written forty years after the optimal date with which this study deals, Vinchon's essay is highly significant not only because it represents the very first

academic study on the Japanese ghost print but also because it offers a reflection on the matter from the point of view of someone who was close to the pre- and post-war avant-garde. Vinchon reveals that by 1924 there was an extensive body of Japanese ghost prints extant in France in both private collections, such as that of Henri Vever, and public collections, such as that of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Vinchon begins his essay by discussing the concept of the Japanese ghost and acknowledging the work of both Lafcadio Hearn and Mitford in translating and publicising Japanese ghost literature for the Western-European audience. Both, he argues, played a fundamental role in establishing an interest in this subject in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He then goes on to review just how extensive the ghost print genre was in the work of Japanese printmakers by citing and discussing relevant works that were available for study in Paris at that time.

*The Illustrated Night Parade of 100 Demons* (1776) designed by Toriyama Sekien (1712-1788), the teacher of Utamaro, is discussed. At least one volume of this work was extant by 1924. Vinchon then goes on to explore successive ghost works by Sekien including his *Illustrated Bag of 100 Demons* (1784) and then *Bag of 100 designs of things during twilight hours*. Works from this latter volume included spider ghosts, bamboo ghosts and images of *rokuro-kubi*. Vinchon notes that these three works by Sekien represent an almost complete iconography of popular Japanese demonology. Copies of all these works he notes were available in the Vever Collection as well as the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Vinchon then turns attention to an unknown artist of the Kano school who was working at the same time as Sekien. This artist produced five albums of ghost prints, more traditional in nature and in the style of Moronobu. The designs in these albums comprised images of what Vinchon calls 'humanised animals' and one of these is illustrated. Vinchon explains how Utamaro himself engaged with the *yōkai* theme citing a work known as *Seven different aspects of those who have drunk too much* before producing his own version of *100 Fantastic Tales*. These works, Vinchon argues, were already well known in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century because the de Goncourt Brothers possessed copies.

Hokusai is discussed and Vinchon records that the percentage of ‘fantastical’ works is considerable noting in particular the five well-known plates for *Hyaku Monogatari* (Pls. 1, 2, 3a, 10 & 80). Vinchon, however also draws particular attention to Hokusai’s *manga* albums which are filled with *yōkai* imagery and which were well known to French artists and collectors (Pls. 33a & 58) (Vinchon, 1924: 24). Briefly, Vinchon steps away from the prints to consider a range of *netsuke* in the Vever Collection which also take the form of *yōkai* and indeed, as we have seen from the 1883 catalogue of Japanese art held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, many such *netsuke* were present in private collections as early as the 1880s.

Vinchon also discusses Takehara Shunsen’s images for *100 Fantastic Stories* then in the Vever Collection as well as the work of Rinsai Soji, who studied in Hokusai’s studio and also illustrated his own version of *100 Stories*, a copy of which existed in the Bibliothèque Nationale. In addition, Vinchon calls forth a version of *100 Demons of the Night* illustrated by Seio and Koga Kou copies of which could be found not only in the Bibliothèque Nationale but also in private collections in France. *Yōkai* works by Toyokuni, Kunisada and Kuniyoshi are discussed and Vinchon illustrates two of these including a wonderful print by Kunisada called *Ghost of the Swamp* (pl. 25) then in the Vever Collection. Incidentally, it appears that an edition of this print was also present in the collection of Van Gogh, catalogued as *Onoe Baikō as a female ghost holding a baby*, as mentioned above. Vinchon continues to discuss Kuniyoshi’s works including the album *Festival Lanterns* and *The Phantoms of Hara-Kiri* (by which Vinchon means *The Monsters* (*Bakemono Chushingura*) of 1840-1842). A copy of Kuniyoshi’s *Minamoto Yoritomo and the Earth Spider* (pl. 6) was also illustrated although Vinchon confuses the title in his caption. The term *école vulgaire* is employed to describe these prints and Vinchon notes that this specific genre of *ukiyo-e* comprises in total thousands of examples<sup>8</sup> (Vinchon, 1924:25).

All in all, then, what this article demonstrates is that by 1924 an abundance of *yōkai* prints and albums existed in both private and public collections in France. Whilst, admittedly, Vinchon describes the situation as it existed just after the First World War, we know from the evidence offered above that many examples of the genre were pre-existent in French collections and had been since the 1880s. This chapter then has provided not only a contextual survey of the arrival and dissemination of Japanese

prints in France and, more specifically of *yōkai* works, but also serves as an evidential base upon which to proceed in considering Vinchon's claim that this genre exerted a specific impact upon the modern artist (Vinchon, 1924: 22).

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1. See end note 7, Chapter I
2. The prints were sold at Sotheby's in their sale *Japanese Prints and Drawings from the Vever Collection*: Part I, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1974; Part II, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1975.
3. *Japanese Prints and Drawings from the Vever Collection*: Part III, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1977; Part IV, 30<sup>th</sup> October 1977.
4. Also known as Minamoto Raikō
5. In the village of Okabe, one of the fifty three post-stations on the Tōkaidō Road, there lived an old woman who was actually a cat witch. She would persuade young women to enter her home whereupon she would kill and eat them. The legend is that the witch was eventually turned into a 'cat stone' which remains at Okabe to this day ([www.jameelcentre.ashmolean.org](http://www.jameelcentre.ashmolean.org)).
6. The Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, and the Storm God, Susano, were sister and brother. Susano would tease Amaterasu and in one incident Susano unleashed upon Amaterasu's rice fields a herd of piebald colts thus destroying all her crops. Amaterasu was devastated and sought solace in a cave causing perpetual darkness because she refused to leave. She was only enticed out when another goddess instructed many of the other deities to stage a dance outside the cave where a mirror had been hung in the branches of a tree. Amaterasu came to the mouth of the cave out of curiosity whereupon, after having caught sight of her own reflection in the mirror, she was enticed out of the cave and forbidden to return; and light was restored to the world (Piggott, 1969: 15).
7. Vinchon was a widely published author, writing, amongst other works *L'art et la folie*, which was published in Paris by Librairie Stock in 1924 and *Hystérie*, published by the same press in 1925.
8. In the work of Kuniyoshi alone we can identify the album *Ghost Stories: Night Procession of the 100 Demons* (*Kaidan hyakki yagyō*), 1836. *Clowning Around* (*Dōke*), 1839-1842. *Animated Cherry Petals*, 1840-1842. *The Monsters* (*Bakemono Chushingura*), 1840-1842. *Tengu*, 1842. *Oni*, 1844.



## **Chapter III**

### **The Yōkai Imagination of Symbolism and Its Origins**

Symbolism was a European artistic movement that developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The movement began in France and Belgium in the 1870s and 1880s and then filtered throughout the rest of Europe reaching as far as Russia in the East and Greece in the South. Symbolism was of pan-European dimensions. The movement was also interdisciplinary; it emerged in painting and sculpture, found expression in the graphic arts, it manifested in literature, music, the performing arts and in architecture and design. Symbolism arose as a direct response on the part of artists to a society under profound stress at the social, political, economic and cultural levels.

The Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had triggered a process of fundamental change across Europe. Whilst much Enlightenment thinking was positive and productive; emphasising the principles of egalitarianism, freedom of thought, social justice and the appliance of logic, rationality and scientific endeavour to improve the lot of mankind, its emphasis on efficiency, processes, standardisation, materialism and especially in trying to improve the 'wealth of nations' was to produce by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a set of societies across Europe that were all, in varying degrees and in varying ways, struggling to cope with the profound changes wrought by the consequences of these ideas.

The forces of industrialisation, urbanism, capitalism and materialism which now dominated modern European society created an opulent middle-class which had assumed enormous social, political, economic and cultural power. The wealth of the few was bought at the expense of the many. The ostentation of the middle-class life-style and its culture rested upon the poverty, deprivation and social distress of an enormous urban working-class. European society was fractured: the development of radical political movements that sought to redress social and economic inequality, such as Socialism, Communism and Anarchism, now challenged the political authority of the *bourgeoisie* of the modern state which they had constructed. Many sought to opt out of the pressures of modern life and go back to the land. The Church, especially in France, challenged the materialism and secularism of the French state. Philosophers such as Nietzsche engaged in biting deconstructions of the modern problem and urged their

readers to rise above the suffocating herd instinct of modernity, to create their own world, their own ideals and their own morality. At the level of the arts this widespread discontent manifested in Symbolism.

In this chapter we will explore why the artists of the Symbolist generation should have been attracted to the *yōkai* print and what they had to gain by referencing it in their work. What were the predisposing factors that made this engagement possible or even desirable? Our discussion will focus upon two themes: firstly the existing use of ghost imagery in Western European painting and how the Symbolist use of *yōkai* was informed by it and related to it. We will explore the work of artists such as Grünewald, Blake and Fuseli. Secondly the development of *japonisme* from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards which set the conditions for the appreciation of the *yōkai* prints in particular as the century drew to a close. We will begin with a case-study of Aubrey Beardsley, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century English artist, who employed *yōkai* imagery in his graphic work, and set his example in the wider context of artistic engagement with ghost imagery at the start of the century and of developing *japonisme* from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It is these contextual factors, we might argue, that created the conditions in which Japanese *yōkai* prints could be both appreciated and employed in a meaningful way at a time of perceived social and cultural collapse. The chapter concludes that Symbolist artists employed *yōkai* images for many of the same purposes as painters such as Blake and Fuseli had employed their ghosts but that the *yōkai* tradition, discovered as a result of the later Pre-Raphaelite love of *japonisme*, also offered a means of challenging conventional modes of thought, of stimulating a sense of the exotic and of opening up new imaginative horizons.

We may begin by considering the work of Aubrey Beardsley specifically because Vinchon, in his essay, draws a direct connection between his work and that of the *yōkai* artists (Vinchon, 1924: 22). Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872-1898) had a short but intense artistic career lasting only five years, culminating in his fatal contraction of Tuberculosis in 1898, when he was just twenty-five years old. He is most noted for his black and white illustrations that are associated with the *fin-de-siècle* period during the late 1890s (West, 1996: 262). Beardsley existed and worked in the context of the Pre-Raphaelites, the Arts and Crafts movement and the cultural vogue for *japonisme*. He was initially considered a late addition to the Pre-Raphaelites through his connection with

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), however, by the time he was twenty he had established a viable movement all of his own, influenced heavily by the architecture of his home town of Brighton and also by Japanese art (Brophy, 1976: 6). His impact was such that there was even a Beardsley cult as far afield as Russia. According to Brophy the Brighton Pavilion struck a particular chord with Beardsley and he used its interior architecture as inspiration for a number of his illustrations (Brophy, 1976: 8). In an account from 1838 the Banqueting Room of the Pavilion was described as “‘Embellished in an imitation of Japan work’, it perhaps helped to prompt Beardsley’s ‘new style’ of 1892 ‘founded on Japanese art’” (Brophy, 1976: 8).

In 1892 Beardsley received his first significant artistic commission from the publisher J. M. Dent who was looking for an artist to illustrate his latest production, *Morte d’Arthur*, by Thomas Malory. Beardsley created over three hundred different drawings and decorative designs for the project which were grounded in diverse sources and influences (Calloway, 1998: 45-48). Calloway aptly describes him as “a sort of butterfly, he alighted upon images as diverse as early Italian pictures, sixteenth-century book illustrations, French eighteenth engravings, Greek vase paintings and the works of Japanese printmakers.” (Calloway, 1998: 52). It was the London museums and galleries that provided Beardsley with the opportunity to study and learn from these particular artistic styles and not least the Victoria & Albert Museum (Calloway, 1998: 52).

In Beardsley’s time the Japanese print collection in the Victoria & Albert Museum contained at least three prints that feature or allude to a Japanese *yōkai*. These included: *Minamoto Raikō and the ‘Earth Spider’* of 1843 by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (Pl. 6); the print *Nakamura Shikan II as Tadanobu* of 1835 (Pl. 27) by Shunbaisai Hokuei (died 1837) which depicts the character Tadanobu, a *kitsune* (fox demon) (see Appendix II, Chapter I) disguised as the servant of Lady Shizuka from the play *Yoshitsune Senbon Zakura* (*Yoshitsune and the 1,000 Cherry Trees*); and the print *The Rescue of Minamoto no Tametomo by Goblins*, c.1851, also by Kuniyoshi (Pls. 28a & d). Each of these woodcut prints were, according to their museum number<sup>1</sup>, acquired by the museum in 1886 and would have thus been accessible to Beardsley at the time of his research. The Victoria & Albert Museum’s collection also contains five print designs, ink and colour on paper, by Utagawa Sadahide (1807-c.1878) detailing specifically *bakemono* (monster) characters

including *kasa-obake*, *kitsune*, *rokuro-kubi*, *ubume* (see Appendix II, Chapter I): *The Giant Octopus and Others* of 1830-1844 (Pl. 29a); *Mouse Monster and Others* (Pl. 29b); *Fox-Genkurô and Others* (Pl. 29c); *The Monster of Good and Evil and Others* (Pl. 29d); *Mendicant Monk in Katsushika and Others* (Pl. 29e).

Although the date of accession into the museum's collection, as suggested by each museum number, is 1909, which post-dates the death of Beardsley by eleven years they were acquired from the Happer collection, having been sold by the auction house then known as Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge ([www.trocadero.com](http://www.trocadero.com)). John Stewart Happer was a resident of New York. as can be seen from the auction catalogue (Pl. 30); if one presumes that Mr. Happer did not travel extensively to Japan one may believe that prints and works, such as these inks on paper, were available from dealers in the West, in Paris, London, and New York, especially as Sadahide was included in the few Japanese print artists whose works were exhibited at the 1866 Paris Exposition ([www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org) [Sadahide]). Accounting for the fact that the Japanese prints were printed in serial format it is possible that other Western collectors and dealers of Japanese art may have possessed works such as these in their collections. Such collectors of Japanese prints and *objets d'art* with which Beardsley is known to have associated included Liberty, Siegfried Bing, Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon (Zatlin, 1997: 90).

Sir Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843-1917), the director of the famous department store in London, entertained a particular passion for Japanese art. Having visited Japan, Liberty then took advantage of the re-opened trade between Japan and the West and began to sell imported Japanese fabrics and furnishings alongside work by Arts and Crafts practitioners, eventually moving into the marketing and sale of Art Nouveau (Mawer, 2014).

The establishments of both Bing and Liberty were well known and much discussed in the art press of the day and many avant-garde artists, such as Beardsley, were patrons of their establishments. Those artist-designers most closely associated with Art Nouveau, therefore, were surrounded by the influences of Japan. Japanese ceramics, fans, lacquer-works and screens became available, along with *ukiyo-e* woodcut prints and *manga* illustrations by artists such as Ando Hiroshige (1797-1858), Katsushika Hokusai (1760-

1849) and Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806) (Duncan, 1994: 15). Books relating to the works of these artists became available, some examples of which may have been the three volumes by Katsushika Hokusai entitled *Hokusai Gaen*, published in 1820, 1843 and 1870 consisting of *manga* illustrations of Japanese flora and fauna as well as warrior scenes, landscapes and seascapes. Lancaster in his essay "Oriental Contributions to Art Nouveau" notes that in England Edward William Godwin (1833-1886), the pioneering architect and designer of the Aesthetic Movement, whom Beardsley knew well, possessed a collection of Japanese prints which were displayed in his home (Lancaster, 1952: 299). Godwin was also known for using Japanese art to influence his architectural and design projects which introduced a fashion called 'Anglo-Japanese', an excellent example of which may be seen in his *Vase*, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum (Pl. 31).

People like Liberty, Godwin, Wilde and Bing, whom Beardsley knew well, set the context for the artist's own love and appreciation of Japanese art and printmaking.

In c.1893 Dent commissioned Beardsley for a second project, a series of smaller works entitled *Bon-Mots of Sydney Smith and R. Brinsley Sheridan* (Calloway, 1998: 55). This decorated work allowed Beardsley to explore his passion for Japanese prints and potentially the Japanese ghost prints since certain of the illustrations for this project are directly comparable to certain Japanese *yōkai* images. For example, there are two illustrations on pages 40 and 133 of figures with elongated necks that coil over themselves, which seem exploit the frightening image of the Japanese *yōkai* known as *rokuro-kubi* (Pls. 32a & b). On page 179 Beardsley has illustrated a creature that bears a resemblance to a fox, potentially influenced by the *kitsune yōkai* (Pl. 32c); pages 51 and 79 contain horned devil-like creatures, which remind one of the horned *oni* (Pls. 32d-e); throughout these *Bon-Mots* are also several images of what we might call 'floating heads', inspired perhaps by the Japanese *yōkai* monster *nuke-kubi* (see Appendix II, Chapter I) (Pl. 32f). Beardsley employed similar imagery in works such as *J'ai baisé ta bouche Iokanaan* (1893), a study for *The Climax* (1894) that illustrated the play *Salome* by Oscar Wilde, as published in *The Studio*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1893 ([www.collections.vam.ac.uk](http://www.collections.vam.ac.uk) [Beardsley]). This print shows Salome holding the head of John the Baptist; the blood flowing from the severed head to the ground forms a continuous, curving line which is not unlike the sinuous neck of a *rokuro-kubi* (Pl. 32g).

Zatlin, in her essay “Aubrey Beardsley's ‘Japanese’ Grotesques”, details how Beardsley was influenced by the Japanese ‘grotesque’ or ghost genre of prints, referencing specifically Beardsley’s ‘*bon-mots*’ (Zatlin, 1997). Zatlin begins by mentioning sources from which Beardsley may have begun to develop his fascination with the Japanese supernatural. She notes that as a school-boy, Beardsley owned, or had access to, a copy of *Tales of Old Japan* by A. B. Mitford which was originally published in 1871 (Zatlin, 1997: 89). Naturally, one might assume that if Beardsley was an avid reader of Mitford’s tales he may also have read the work of Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) who, although his *Kwaidan* stories were not published until after his own death, had begun to write about Japan and its ghostly heritage in *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*; Volume I was first published in 1894 by Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. in London and thus would have been easily accessible to Beardsley.

The impact of both writers was strong not only in Britain but also on the continent where their works were well known and much appreciated (Vinchon, 1924). Both writers referenced a particular long-necked *yōkai* of Japanese ghost lore, commonly known as *rokuro-kubi* (see Appendix II, Chapter I), often depicted as a head floating upon a long, snake-like neck, extending almost *ad infinitum* far from its body. While Mitford does not include in his book a tale specifically relating to *rokuro-kubi* there is, accompanying another tale known as *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*<sup>2</sup>, a woodcut showing a similar *yōkai* rising out of a basket (Pl. 33) (Mitford, 1871/2012: 250/127). Zatlin also suggests that Beardsley may have owned some *Manga* illustrations by Katsushika Hokusai (Zatlin, 1997: 89), many of which featured ghosts with elongated limbs or necks, similar to that of the *rokuro-kubi* (Pls. 34a & b) (Bouquillard & Marquet, 2007: 130-135).

There was much interest in Japanese literature and culture both in Britain and France in the latter quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as evidenced by translations into English and French of Japanese works such as the three-volume *Fugaku Hiyaku-kei* (*A Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji*) translated by F. V. Dickins (Zatlin, 1997: 90). Frederick Victor Dickins (1838-1915) was a British Doctor who travelled to Japan between 1861 and 1866 and began producing English translations of Japanese writings from 1866, including the *Hyak nin is'shiu, or Stanzas by a century of poets, being Japanese lyrical odes* (published in London in 1866), *Chiushingura, or, the Loyal League: a Japanese Romance* (published in

London in 1880) (Cordier, 1915) and *Taketoei No Okina No Monogatari (The Old Bamboo-Hewer's Story)* (Dickins, 1888). These books may have been available in book shops such as Jones & Evans owned by Frederick Evans, a great friend of Aubrey Beardsley's, and libraries, which, along with the collections that were becoming available at the museums, such as the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum, were readily available to artists like Beardsley (Zatlin, 1997: 90). Other literature that was available included the famous *Genji Monogatari: The Most Celebrated of the Classical Japanese Romances* published in London by Trübner & Co. in 1882 and also *Ugetsu Monogatari (Tales of moonlight and rain)*, by Ueda Akinari. Although this was first published in Japan in 1776 it is not unreasonable to suggest that copies were exported during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A wide variety of similar literature existed in Beardsley's own day and just after, such as Lafcadio Hearn's *In Ghostly Japan* of 1899 which features the tale *Story of a Tengu* (a powerfully magical, wise and knowledgeable *yōkai*) (see Appendix II, Chapter I); and also *Kokoro, Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life* which includes the chapter "Of Ghosts and Goblins".

The susceptibility of Symbolist artists such as Beardsley to the influence of *yōkai* prints may best be understood and explained as a development of a broader interest in supernatural and the macabre that had haunted the visual arts since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and which had been exploited by artists of the Romantic generation as a means of contesting what they considered the nefarious effects of Enlightenment thinking. The Symbolists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were, in many ways, the heirs of an artistic ideology that had first sprung up and been given voice by the Romantics who had preceded them by nearly a hundred years. Artists such as Blake, Fuseli and Goya, for example, had often employed images of ghosts, demons and apparitions as a means of reflecting upon their experience of modernity. Indeed, the roots of Symbolist preoccupations with the 'uncanny' and the 'exotic' in general and with *yōkai* prints in particular, are to be found in the Romantic era.

Emerging as a reaction to Enlightenment thinking of the 18<sup>th</sup> century which promoted ideas of logic, rationality, efficiency, classical values and faith in science and secularism as opposed to the world of feeling, imagination and the spiritual, the Romantics reclaimed the darker areas of life and of the human mind that the Enlightenment had disparaged. The Romantics might have had little quibble with the Enlightenment in

terms of its egalitarianism, spirit of reform and commitment to social progress, if it were not for the fact that its effects were considered corrupting and nefarious: the Industrial Revolution, capitalism, urbanism, child labour, standardisation and categorisation. From a socio-historical point of view, then, the work of the Romantics may be understood as representing a critical reaction to these effects.

One aspect of their work was to promote an interest in the Medieval and the Gothic as opposed to the Renaissance and the Classical and one aspect of the Gothic that attracted the Romantics was its preoccupation with the supernatural. Romantics such as Blake and Fuseli particular admired the work of artists such as Hans Baldung-Grien (1484-1545) and Matthias Grünewald (c.1470-1528) both of whom, in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, had employed the imagery of witches and monsters to great effect in their work. Baldung-Grien for example, had created a series of works themed around witches. These included his woodcut *Witches' Sabbath*, 1510 (Pl. 35), whilst Grünewald, for his part, had deployed allegorised monsters, often in the form of horrific birds, to represent the temptations of the flesh in works such as his *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, 1512-1516 (Pl. 36). Macabre and unnerving themes such as these demonstrate a fascination with death, suffering, mortality and evil within Western European culture that was particularly strong during the late Middle Ages, an after-effect of events such as the Black Death. This obsession manifested across the arts as a concept known as the *danse macabre* (dance of death) whereby the dead lead the living in a procession towards death; essentially an expression of the inexorability of death. Hans Holbein the Younger (c.1497-1543) had produced a series of woodcut prints on the theme of the *Dance of Death* during 1523-1526 (published in 1538) that portrayed a skeletal Death interacting with the living. It was this 'gothic' *danse macabre* that Romanticism sought to resurrect.

William Blake (1757-1827) did much to promote such ideas in his art. His tempera painting *The Ghost of a Flea*, c.1819-20 (Pl. 37), for example, is just as much an allegorised monster as those that we might find in Grünewald or even Bosch. Blake alleged that the painting depicted a vision that he had experienced in which he was visited by the spirit of a flea claiming that all of its kind were the insect reincarnation of the souls of men who had held a bloody and violent life ([www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk) [Blake]). Blake's fantastical and ugly image may be said to reflect upon and to express the violence and ugliness of the human condition as he experienced in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Lister notes that Blake has set the scene as though it is a stage with parted curtains and a backdrop of shooting stars and has provided the creature with the instruments for blood-letting: a bleeding bowl and a dagger (Lister, 1986: Plate 57). Blake exaggerates the gruesome features of his ghost, presents it in a menacing stance and provides it with a formidable physique to instil the utmost fear in the viewer. The same techniques mark out the depiction of Japanese *oni* (see Appendix II, Chapter I), amongst the strongest and most evil *yōkai* whose role it was to capture and punish humans destined for hell and perform horrific forms of torture and punishment (Pl. 38). It is easy to see how Symbolist artists in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, whose ideological stance had been informed by Romanticism, might have found in the Japanese *yōkai* tradition, an expressive and novel substitute for such allegorised demons as appeared in Blake's work.

The Swiss-born artist Johann Heinrich Fuseli (1741-1825) also employed the subject of ghostly apparitions in his work. His inspiration was often, but not exclusively, drawn from literary sources such as Shakespeare and Milton, particularly those that involved ghosts, fairies, witches and other such legends (Schiff, 1975: 11-12). *The Nightmare*, (1781 & 1790) (Pl. 39), for example, depicts an Incubus, a demon which settles on the chest of a sleeping female with the intention of copulating with her. In Fuseli's painting the Incubus is shown crouched on the stomach of a woman in a deep faint. The head of spirit horse (used by the Incubus as transport) protrudes through the drapes behind the bed (Schiff, 1975: 122). Schiff maintains that Fuseli was not in himself a believer in the supernatural but used the theme as a means of social-political commentary on the nature of the times (Schiff, 1975: 13). Parallels may again be drawn with the *yōkai* tradition in that the role of the incubus in Fuseli's painting recalls the *yōkai* known as *baku*, a holy guardian of humans that feeds on nightmares converting the fear induced by the dream into prosperity (see Appendix II, Chapter I). Lafcadio Hearn references the *baku*, also known as the Eater of Dreams, in his book *Kotto*, 1902:

“the old invocation to the Baku still survives in common parlance: *Baku kurae! Baku kurae!* – “Devour, O Baku! devour my evil dream!” ... When you awake from a nightmare, or from any unlucky dream, you should quickly repeat that invocation three times; then the *Baku* will eat the dream and will change the misfortune or the fear into good fortune and gladness” (Hearn, 1902/2012: 127).

The point is not that either Blake or Fuseli were influenced by Japanese demonology but rather that later in the century, artists may have discovered in the new-found

vocabulary of Japanese ghost-imagery, a means as versatile and expressive of reflecting upon their world, as their Romantic forbears, but a means that was decidedly exotic and new to the European tradition of which they formed a part.

In the 1840s Romanticism fell victim to the swelling tide of philosophical positivism which pervaded European thinking, society and culture. Artists were increasingly called upon to engage with material reality and to reproduce it in the most detailed way possible. Artistic value came to reside in the degree of objectivity that a painting could offer and hence forms of Realism established themselves in the arts across Europe. The Romantic legacy, however, survived, in part, but transformed, in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and to some extent, too, in the Arts and Crafts movement, both of which provided the most tangible backdrop for the Symbolist generation both in Britain and France where both the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts movement were much appreciated.

Pre-Raphaelitism originated in 1848 when Hunt, Millais, the Rossetti brothers, Stephens, Woolner and Collinson created an artistic brotherhood to purify art of the stagnancy into which they felt it had fallen not only recently at the hands of the Academics but since the time of Renaissance. Like the Romantics before them the Pre-Raphaelites looked back to the Medieval period, a past age of faith, in which art had clearly expressed moral and spiritual qualities. Their mission was to revivify art by returning to those values and breathing new life into them. As is well known, they were supported by the art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) who was keen that art should express both a sense of 'truth' and 'beauty'. Ruskin considered that a work of art should combine a detailed depiction of reality, in accordance with his 'truth to nature' ideals with a sense of the spiritual; a work where the foundations of which lay in the reproduction of reality but which would have evolved to express the artist's own 'ideal'<sup>3</sup>, channelled using his imagination (Kotzin, 1966: 348). Within two or three years, however, the artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had begun to diverge from their initial agenda. By the mid-1850s Millais' work was becoming more reflective and melancholy in nature. *Autumn Leaves* of 1856, for example, represents a stark departure from the precepts and practices which first defined Pre-Raphaelitism. The work reflects upon the transience of life and presents itself as a "melancholy *momento* [*sic*] *mori*" (Gibson, 1999: 66). Rossetti's work became more mystical in the 1860s. *Beata Beatrix*, c.1864-1870

(London: Tate Britain), for example, reflects upon the loss of his wife Elizabeth Siddall as represented by Beatrice, the love of the poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321); Rossetti uses the soft-focus technique and the presence of the dove of the Holy Spirit (also symbolic of the sobriquet 'The Dove' Rossetti used for Elizabeth) to signify the point at which life becomes death (Fowle, 2000).

It was at this point that Pre-Raphaelitism entered its second stage. It was now headed by Rossetti and developed by his two young protégées Morris and Burne-Jones. At this time artists such as Rossetti were already exposed to the influences of Japanese culture. Rossetti painted two works featuring a *koto*, a Japanese musical instrument popular during the Edo period. The first of these was *The Blue Bower* of 1865 (Pl. 40) and the second, *A Sea Spell* of 1877 (Fogg Art Museum, USA). Henry Johnson, in his article "Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Japan" suggests that the level of detail to which the *koto* has been painted in *The Blue Bower* indicates that Rossetti may have had access to, or owned himself, a genuine *koto*, rather than simply copying the image from another source. Johnson notes too that Rossetti, along with other artists such as his brother, William Michael, and James Abbott McNeil Whistler (1834-1903) frequented the Parisian shop known as *La Jonque Chinoise* in the Rue de Rivoli (Chapter II above & Johnson, 2005: 148-149) although another possible source might have been Liberty's of London which opened in 1875 and marketed oriental goods. Whistler was painting in London at this time and also employed a host of Japanese references in his work. *Caprice in Purple and Gold* of 1864 (Pl. 41) demonstrate just how extensive an impact Japanese art had amongst English artists four years before the shogun regime formally fell from power. Here Whistler pulls into play references to Japanese porcelain, painted screens, kimonos, furniture, hair-styles and *ukiyo-e* prints to create a means of escaping the banal and mundane experience of contemporary life by offering his audience a dream of far off, exotic worlds. Neither Rossetti nor Whistler engaged with the *yōkai* tradition for the rebarbative nature of such imagery would have contested the refined and delicate moods of their paintings but for a younger generation of artist, entering a period of *fin de siècle* pessimism and ready to engage afresh with the challenges of modernity, the *yōkai* print offered a new vehicle of expression.

This then was the context in which Symbolist artists such as Beardsley were working and it is this context that paved the way for their appreciation of Japanese art and their

love the *yōkai* tradition in particular. The work of Romantic painters such as Blake, Fuseli and Goya was already well known and the more contemporary work of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Whistler was undergoing something of a cult status in continental Europe. For a generation of younger artists who felt dislocated from modernity, with its emphasis on materialism, capitalism, secularism and the 'here and now', and in which both society and culture were perceived as being in a terminal state of collapse, it seemed natural, we may argue, to reawaken the Romantic ghosts of Blake and Fuseli as a means of reflecting upon their world but to clothe them afresh in Japanese attire, to give those ghosts a new and more modern form by exploiting the exotic connotations of Japanese tradition, not for the creation of heady and wistful atmospheres, but for a much more subversive purpose – to emblematised the nightmarish qualities of the modern condition.

Symbolism, like Romanticism almost a hundred years before, represented an incisive cultural response to the spirit of the age. Emerging in the 1880s, Symbolism sought both to contest and to escape modernity. This generation of artists, writers and composers distanced themselves from the canons of Enlightenment and, more recently, Positivist thought which they believed had corroded the human experience irretrievably. Some Symbolists such as Rodin, in his sculptures for *The Gates of Hell*, for example, reflected upon the collapse of values and the nightmare of the modern condition whilst others, such as Redon, sought a means of escape into an imaginary *au delà*, and yet others such as Gauguin and Van Gogh, sought a physical escape from modernity in far-flung societies that were considered 'authentic' and uncorrupted by modernity.

Symbolism represented a search for something new, fresh, invigorating and something that might transcend the banal, philistine nature of modernity. For those committed to modernity and to forms of realism and naturalism in art and literature such as Zola, the development of Symbolism was anathema. Zola vehemently attacked Gustave Moreau in an article from a Salon review commissioned by the Russian journal *Vestnik Evropy* (*The Messenger of Europe*), published in Moscow:

"It was inevitable that contemporary naturalism and the efforts of art to study nature should call forth a reaction and bring forward artists with an idealistic turn of mind. This retrograde movement, in the realms of the imagination, is particularly interesting in the case of Gustave Moreau ... He paints his dreams, not simple, naïve dreams such as we all have, but sophisticated, complicated,

enigmatic dreams which are difficult to understand immediately. What value can such art have in these days? It is a question which I find difficult to reply to. It seems to me, as I have already said, to be an outright reaction against the modern world. Painting is in no great danger from this movement.” (Delevoy, 1978: 40)

Zola’s description of Symbolism as a ‘retrograde movement’ summarises neatly how misunderstood Symbolism as an art movement was. Many mistook the imaginative imagery of Symbolist paintings to be antiquated and out of kilter with the newly industrialised Europe, for it was no longer the fashion to paint from the mythical, it was thought that modern paintings should capture the moment, the ‘here and now’ as advocated in Baudelaire’s essay “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863). Zola’s protestations, however, were to prove vain for Symbolism spread across Europe, adopted an interdisciplinary expression and contested modernity, either head on or indirectly by seeking an escape from it, wherever and in whatever guise modernity presented itself, from Russia to America, from Norway to Greece, through music, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, design and performing arts the Symbolist agenda manifested its dissatisfaction with the modern condition. It adopted various means and strategies for negotiating its opposition but one of those, we will now argue, was to employ the iconography of the Japanese *yōkai* tradition *either* to allegorise the nightmarish qualities of the modern condition, in the manner of the Romantics, *or* to escape it by employing such imagery to jolt the spectator out of conventional ways of thinking, to surprise, to destabilise expectations and to invoke the world of the extraordinary, the magical, the imaginative and the *au delà*. Indeed we might argue that the *yōkai* tradition offered above all a potential means of engaging with the ‘primitive’ at a time when the ‘civilised’ was considered bankrupt; the ‘primitive’ and refreshing qualities of societies and cultures such as Japan that the Symbolists considered ‘authentic’ and the ‘primitive’ and dark aspects of the human mind which yielded images such as these. It is not for nothing that Vinchon, who was close to the Surrealists, described these prints as ‘*vulgaire*’ and in this sense it might be argued that an engagement with these works fed into the developing discourse of the ‘primitive’ in the visual arts.

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1. Each item in the entire collection belonging to the Victoria & Albert Museum is allocated a unique museum number which ends in a hyphenated four digits. The four digits at the end of each museum number constitutes the year in which the museum acquired the object, as confirmed by the Assistant Curator of the Asian Department. The museum number for the Japanese prints mentioned here are as follows: *Minamoto Raikō and the ‘Earth Spider’* (V&A title: *The Spider Monster Creating Monsters in*

*the Mansion of Minamoto no Yorimitsu*), 1843 - E.10535-1886; *Nakamura Shikan II as Tadanobu*, 1835 - E.5016-1886; and *The Rescue of Minamoto no Tametomo by Goblins*, c.1851 - E.10605-1886.

2. *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*

There once lived a kind-hearted old man that had nurtured a young sparrow. One day the old man's irritable wife caught the sparrow pecking at her starch paste so she cut out the sparrow's tongue as punishment and let the sparrow fly away. When the old man heard of this he went in search of the sparrow; he found the sparrow at the foot of a mountain whereupon he was invited into the sparrow's home and offered refreshment. After a while the old man declared that he had to leave at which point the sparrow offered him a gift of two baskets: one heavy and one light. The old man, being polite, chose the lighter of the two. Upon arriving at home he and his wife discovered that the basket was full of gold and silver. The old woman was greedy and the next day went in search of the sparrow to get her own basket; she was grudgingly invited by the sparrow into his home but upon leaving the old woman was not offered any gift. Not being as polite as her husband the old woman asked for a token by which to remember her visit and the sparrow duly offered her the two baskets. The old woman chose the heavy basket and upon opening it at home found it to be full of monsters (Mitford, 1871/2012: 250/127).

3. This author's interpretation of the 'ideal' for the Symbolist artist involves the artist's own interpretation of the expression of Truth and Beauty within their art. 'Truth' meaning the message that the artist wishes to express through their work of art and 'Beauty' being the process by which this message is delivered, be it through the influence of their own dreams and imagination, the supernatural, the forms within nature, history or mythology.

## **Chapter IV**

### **'Different Creatures inhabit the Countries of the Ocean':**

#### **Odilon Redon and Japanese *yōkai* imagery**

Odilon Redon was, in his own day, considered one of the leading artists of French Symbolism. He was a skilled colourist who excelled in the mediums of oil and pastel, using colour in a high suggestive, expressive and evocative way to appeal to the imagination of the viewer. His name and reputation, however, was grounded not in the world of colour but of black and white. Redon was one of the great lithographer printmakers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was in this medium that he first and most consistently gave expression to the Symbolist agenda. His artistic inspiration was plucked from his imagination and his artistic attitude was heavily affected by his own milieu. Redon's immediate family began their existence in New Orleans when Redon's father Bertrand Redon met and married Redon's mother Marie Guérin. It was in New Orleans that Bertrand and Marie had their first child Félix Ernest and where Marie became pregnant with Odilon. However, in 1840, just before Marie gave birth to Odilon, Bertrand moved his young family to Bordeaux by the sea, with Marie narrowly missing giving birth to her second child during the journey<sup>1</sup>. Although born in Bordeaux, Odilon, owing to a fragile constitution, spent his formative years in the countryside rather than with his family in the city. He resided at Peyrelebadé in Médoc until the age of eleven, a vineyard estate purchased by his father prior to the family's move to Bordeaux (Gamboni, 1989/Whittall, 2011: 17-18).

These events posed a series of contradictions for Redon that he found difficult to resolve in later life and created a sense of personal dislocation and disjuncture in relation to his surroundings, a feeling of alienation, that he belonged nowhere specific. A greater understanding of Redon and his art can therefore be achieved when illuminated by this aspect of the artist's personal psychology. Redon saw himself as a transient being, struggling within himself to belong to one place or one time. In his journal *À soi-même* (*To Myself*) Redon comments upon his lack of connection to his birthplace of Bordeaux and his desire for the romance of the unknown:

"Travel by sea was at that time a long and dangerous adventure. It seems that, on this return, bad weather or winds made the boat which carried my parents run the risk of being lost at sea, and I would have loved, thanks to this delay ... to have

been born in the middle of those waves ... a place without a homeland over an abyss." (Redon, 1867-1915 / Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 8).

One can observe Redon's sense of the dramatic within his phraseology. Redon chose to describe his parents' journey as a "dangerous adventure" and rather than taking the practical view that the "bad weather or winds" would have merely delayed his family's passage from New Orleans to Bordeaux, Redon alludes to them being almost "lost at sea". It is Redon's inclination to dramatise and to focus upon the potential tragedy of life that explains, at least to some degree, his attraction to the Japanese ghost story prints.

Redon's background was a tapestry of contrasting elements. His father arrived in New Orleans almost penniless yet by the time Odilon was born in Bordeaux the family had become members of the *bourgeoisie*. Separated from his family and growing up as a *bourgeois* child within peasant surroundings made it difficult for Redon to identify with either end of the social scale. He did not belong to the bourgeoisie of the city but neither did he truly belong to the peasantry of the country (Gamboni, 1989/Whittall, 2011: 19). Redon seemingly rejected his *bourgeois* roots from an early age, as did his contemporary Cézanne, perhaps as a reaction to his perceived rejection by his family or perhaps because he sensed something more 'authentic' in the French peasant community than the 'artificiality' of *bourgeois* culture, society and morality to which he was expected to subscribe. It is with these early experiences that one can begin to understand his eventual foray into the world of Symbolism.

Redon's journal *À soi-même* clearly illustrates where his cultural loyalties and social sympathies really lay:

"A group of several sublime barbarians who arrived from *Tierra del Fuego*, proud human beings, haughty, cruel, mighty and grotesque gave me almost a dream of primitive life, a nostalgia for the pure and simple life of our origins.

A rich financier, probably the owner of the garden, enters the scorched circle which encloses them. The savages look obstinately at the red ribbon which decorates his lapel, while I compare them. How ugly he is, this old *bourgeois*; and they beautiful, these sublime children of polar life!" (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 70).



Observations such as these simultaneously demonstrated Redon's disgust of the *bourgeois* class as well as his own longing for a simpler, more honest, more 'authentic' way of life. Indeed, some of Redon's happiest memories belonged to those few early years spent at Peyrelebadé, among the simplicities of the French countryside and its inhabitants. Like other members of his generation, such as Gauguin, Van Gogh and Pissarro, Redon seems to have associated the countryside and the archaic life of the French peasant commune with a sense of 'authenticity' whilst regarding the 'chic' fashions and tastes of the urban bourgeoisie as 'artificial' and sham. Redon's early preference for the lower social classes may have paved the way for his easy acceptance of the Symbolist attitude. In his memoirs from *À soi-même* Redon recalls his feelings of childhood as an "eternal frolic [...], far from the constraint of the city and of its troubles" (Redon, 1867-1915 / Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 11). Symbolism, of course, was no lover of the artificial urban contexts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and Paris in particular, in which the fashionable city-centres were mere showcases for the *bourgeois* opulence whilst the far-flung outskirts played home to an enormous urban underclass which lived in squalor and poverty. It seems natural therefore that Redon would identify with this artistic movement.

His early experiences may also have predisposed Redon to an interest in the supernatural and the macabre that later underpinned his commitment to Symbolism. Stephen Eisenman notes that Redon, in addition to his lonely and conflicted life as a child, may also have been deeply influenced by the superstitions, folklore, and ghost stories of the Médoquin people with whom he so often came into contact (Eisenman, 1992: 14-15). As evidence of this Eisenman cites a passage from *Bordeaux, Its Wine and the Claret Country* by Charles Cocks, written in 1846:

"The country people of the Gironde, especially the Landais and the inhabitants of Médoc, are very superstitious. They believe in ghosts, witchcraft, and the *maldonné*, or evil eye. Wizards and diviners are still in repute among them, and are consulted by them in case of sickness" (Eisenman, 1992: 16).

It was here, suggests Eisenman, that Redon's interest in the supernatural was first ignited. Eisenman observes, for example, that trees appeared to be especially significant to Redon within his work and this was perhaps because Redon attributed to them a sense of the magical as, according to the Médoquin people, "trees were often supposed sensible to human attentions, intelligent, and possessing magical powers" (Eisenman,

1992: 38-39). It is not without significance, perhaps, that it is the tree that Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), the French critic, poet and forerunner of Symbolism, famously credits as being the chief means by which the noumenal world 'corresponds' with the phenomenal. In the opening lines of his poem "Correspondences", published in *Fleurs du Mal* in 1857, the trees are described as the "living pillars" in "Nature's temple" which speak and commune with mankind:

"In Nature's temple living pillars rise  
speaking sometimes in words of abstruse sense;  
we walk through woods of symbols dark and dense  
that gaze at us with fond, familiar eyes." (Baudelaire, 1857)<sup>2</sup>

Also, at the age of seven, Redon was taken on an extended visit to Paris, during which he recalled being taken to galleries and museums where, of all the works that he saw, only "dramatic paintings left a strong impression on my memory; in my eyes remains only the representation of the excessive violence of life; only this impressed me" (Redon, 1867-1915 / Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 11). Richard Hobbs identifies the works that he saw as being those by Eugène Delacroix (Hobbs, 1977: 11) on the grounds that Delacroix was exhibiting at this time in the Salon exhibitions<sup>3</sup>. This early fascination with the macabre may suggest that later in life, as a Symbolist artist, Redon was drawn more toward the mystery of the ghost prints of the Japanese rather than just the beauty of the Japanese courtesan prints.

In order to explore the connection between Odilon Redon and the ghost prints of Japan one must first understand Redon as a Symbolist artist. Redon was academic neither as a child nor as an adult, he did not start school until the age of eleven and he did not enjoy it. Redon refers to the tears "shed upon boring books, which they ordered me to learn word for word" along with feeling "nothing but resentment toward [his] studies" (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 11)<sup>4</sup>. Redon objected to the constraints that were placed upon him by academic (and Academic) teaching. When Redon was twenty-four (1864) he was enrolled at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris under the tutelage of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), a painter and teacher with whom Redon appeared to have no affinity at all (Hobbs, 1977: 13):

"I was tortured by the teacher [Gérôme] [...] I saw that his obstinate eyes were closed to what mine saw. Two thousand years of evolution or transformation in the manner of understanding optics are a mere trifle in comparison to the

difference between our two opposite souls.” (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 17-18)<sup>5</sup>.

Contrastingly Redon relished the artistic approach of Stanislas Gorin, the art teacher from whom he received lessons at the age of fifteen and who encouraged him to engage his sensitivity in artistic practice<sup>6</sup>. In 1876 Redon wrote of the importance of looking outside of reality when creating art; of taking into account not only the present but also the past as well as the feelings and emotions of both the artist and the audience for whom the artist works. Only then, once it has been fully analysed by artist and audience alike, could a work of art be considered truly completed and placed “in the temple to Beauty that we have erected in our mind” (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 44-45)<sup>7</sup>. Redon’s distaste of what he considered a stale and impotent Academic classicism, as represented by Gérôme and his teaching, combined with his views that the work of art should encompass and convey emotion from the point of creation to the point of reception, provided fertile ground upon which the seeds of Symbolism could root themselves. Redon demonstrated a clear interest in the imagination, rather than material observation, as a source of artistic inspiration and preferred the simplistic, naïve, apparently artless and ‘primitive’ over the artifice of the rule-bound Academic tradition that underpinned the culture of the *bourgeois* status quo.

Having established the role of Redon’s early life and education in laying the foundation for his later receptivity to Symbolist ideology it is also necessary to consider the ways in which Symbolist attitudes to the imagination and to the supernatural may have lead Redon to find inspiration in the Japanese ghost prints.

The Impressionist and the Symbolists reacted quite differently to the social changes of their time. Meyer Schapiro, in his influential essay “The Nature of Abstract Art” of 1937, argued that the innovative formal resolutions of Impressionist art were specifically geared to represent the changed nature of socio-economic and cultural circumstances in the world of modernity; that the broken textures and fleeting images deployed across the surfaces of their paintings emblematised an essentially bourgeois experience of Haussmann’s Paris and its leisure environs that was grounded in a new informality of vision (Schapiro, 1937: 77-98). The Symbolist approach on the other hand was to escape from the world of modernity, from the socio-economic and cultural disjunctures that characterised it, and to seek instead, through the mediums of the imagination, of

intuition and of dream, a world of the 'ideal' located in the *au delà*. Symbolist artists and theorists were so disillusioned with rationalism and industrialisation and its failure to provide the progress it had promised that they sought solace in the simpler eras of the past, alighting upon the mythology of the Romantic era, perhaps because the best way to oppose a fixation on facts is with fiction (Delevoy, 1978: 12). Symbolist artists also deliberately referenced and applied the styles and techniques of what they considered at the time to be 'primitive' forms of art, popularly the woodcut prints of Japan in light of recently re-opened trade routes between Europe and Japan. For a rapidly developing modern Europe with fixed ideas of the way in which objects of material and artistic culture could be employed as indicators of a society's status on the evolutionary scale, where the apogee of 'civilisation' was held to be reflected in the European Academic tradition, these prints, which looked so different, were taken as evidence of a 'primitive', 'inscrutable' and 'exotic' 'otherness' that stood as a counter-sign to modern European *bourgeois* culture.

We know little about Redon's choice of reading material in his early years as an artist but we might assume that, like Beardsely (as referenced in chapter III above), he came across books such as A. B. Mitford's book *Tales of Old Japan* (1871) or any of the volumes translated from Japanese into English by Frederick Victor Dickins (1838-1915), who travelled to Japan between 1861 and 1866 since we know that sources such as these were popular in France (Vinchon, 1924). In addition, we know that Redon visited Holland in 1878 (Hobbs, 1977: 27). This was ten years after the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868, which signified the end of the Edo period and the re-opening of trade channels between Japan and the rest of the world. The importance of Redon visiting Amsterdam is that, as already discussed, the Dutch were the only traders granted permission from the Tokugawa shogunate to continue to trade with Japan throughout the Tokugawa's policy of isolation (c.1615-1868), and prints were readily available here. It was in Amsterdam that Monet came across his first prints and the Van Gogh first purchased them also. In addition, institutions such as the Rijksmuseum had already begun to accumulate large collections of Japanese artefacts, including woodcut prints. Redon visited the Rijksmuseum during his time in Amsterdam (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986:65). We may suppose, therefore, that Redon encountered the Japanese collections that were then on display. We know that these included an engraving of the *samurai* Hasekura Tsunenaga executed in 1615 by Raphaël

Sadeler (II) which had been acquired by the Rijksmuseum in 1816 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). In addition, it is possible that during his stay in Holland he also visited what was then called the 'Museum Japonicum'. This museum had been founded in 1816 when, as the *Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden* in The Hague, it was the first ethnographic museum in Europe with a clearly defined didactic function. Its collections were based both on existing royal collections and a large group of Chinese artefacts from private collections. In the early 1830s, however, Philipp Franz von Siebold began to collect Japanese objects for the museum's collection. In total von Siebold collected about 5,000 objects and his home in Leiden, where the objects were kept, was opened to the public in the early 1830s. Many of these objects included woodblock prints. The collections of Jan Cock Blomhoff and Johannes Gerhard Fredrik van Overmeer Fischer were added in 1826 and 1832 respectively hence forming what we now know as the National Museum of Ethnography in Leiden, to which we will return below. Of course, Redon's most extensive acquaintance with Japanese prints was going to be gained through his network of artistic contacts in Paris in the later years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We do not know what prints, if any, he possessed in his own collection but we do know that he was deeply interested in Japanese art and culture and that these featured as an important source in many of his works. In 1899 Baron Robert de Domecy (1867–1946) commissioned Redon to paint 17 decorative panels for the dining room of the Château de Domecy-sur-le-Vault in Burgundy (Paris, Musée d'Orsay). Here Redon demonstrated the influence of Japanese screen painting in his choice of colours and the rectangular proportions of his enormous panels. There are also two still-life paintings on the theme of a *Vase with Samurai Warrior* of c. 1905 (Pl. 42) and several pastel paintings on the theme of Buddha, such as *The Buddha* of 1906 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay). More directly relevant to our study is the fact that Levy (2007) has already demonstrated the impact of Hokusai's *yōkai* images on two of Redon's lithographs. She has directly related his *Marsh Flower* of 1885 (Pl. 43) to Hokusai's image of *Oiwa* (Pl. 3b) and his lithograph *Then there Appears a Singular Being* of 1883 (Pl. 44) to Hokusai's image of *Okiku: The Plate Mansion Ghost* (Pl. 1), suggesting that these two works by Hokusai informed the imagery and compositions of both works by Redon.

Levy's work opens the doorway to a wider discussion of the impact of the *yōkai* imagery and the theme of the monstrous upon Redon's work. Indeed, whilst it is highly likely that that the two lithographs to which Levy calls attention *were* inspired by Hokusai's

imagery it is worth noting that Redon might have also been inspired by other Japanese traditions of the monstrous and more specifically by that of the *ningyo* or, as may be referred to in the West, a mermaid or *rusalka*, a water demon. The Japanese in the Edo period had a tradition not only of picturing such *ningyo* demons in independent studies (Pl. 45) and woodblock prints, but also of making sculptures of them, sculptures that are today referred to as 'Japanese mermaid mummies'. These 'mummies' were to be found not only in Buddhist and Shintō temples, where they were preserved for religious purposes, but also in more secular contexts such as Japanese festivals (called *misemono*) where they were purchased for luck, fortune and health. The practice of making *ningyo* 'mummies' by stitching the heads of monkeys onto the bodies of fish was popular amongst Japanese fishermen, who could claim to have caught them in their nets.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century however, early travellers in Japan began to illustrate and publish them and the first examples of such 'mummies' began to reach Western Europe. Briot, in his recent study on the subject even identifies a healthy tourist trade in such 'mummies' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Briot, 2007). These 'mummies' appeared in 'cabinets of curiosities', museums such as the Musée Stracké in Ostend (1897-1914) which published a tourist postcard of their example (Pl. 46) and even the famous circus manager Barnum is known to have had one on display. Jan Cock Blomhoff acquired one of these 'mummies' for his collection in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a work now known to be made of fish and animal parts attached by paper and cotton, which he subsequently donated, with the rest of his collection, to the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden where it is possible Redon might have seen it in 1878 along with drawings and prints of such 'mermaid' demons that also formed part of Blomhoff's collection (Pl. 47). We do not know for certain if Redon was aware of this tradition or had even seen works such as these and so our conclusions at present must remain speculative, however the ink drawings, prints and 'mummy' effigies of *ningyo* bear a strikingly close parallel not only to *Then there appears a singular being ...* (Pl. 44) but also to several other works by Redon in which he combines the image of fish and woman, such as his etching and dry-point *Woman wearing a Toque and a Mermaid's Tail* (Pl. 48), his lithograph *Skiapod* (Pl. 49) and his lithograph *A Death's Head crowned with Roses* (Pl. 50).

Although Redon's marine imagery is often explored in relation to the contemporary developments in marine biology, to his interest in the work of scientists such as Pasteur and even contemporary 'science fiction' literature such as Jules Verne's *Vingt mille lieues*

*sous les mers* of 1869-1870 (Paris, P. J. Hetzel) there is scope for arguing that the Japanese obsession with the monsters of the deep and their livid depiction in its art exerted an equally important impact upon Redon. An earthquake in Edo in 1855 gave rise to a popular belief that it had been caused by a type of mythological giant catfish called *namazu* that had escaped captivity from under a rock whilst Ebisu, the god of fishing and commerce, was asleep (Smits, 2006). This gave rise to a widespread genre of prints of the theme of destructive catfish demons known as *namazue-e* (Pl. 51). Some of these invite provocative formal comparison with Redon's marine-themed lithographs such as ... *and the eyes without heads were floating like molluscs* for the *Tentation de Saint-Antoine* of 1896 (Pl. 52).

Levy's work on Redon's interest in Hokusai's *yōkai* imagery does, however, provide a platform for a deeper consideration of the impact that Japanese ghost images might have exerted upon his work. For example, upon comparing the Japanese ghost print *Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider* by Utagawa Kuniyoshi, 1843 (Pl. 6) with Odilon Redon's *Spider*, 1881 (Pl. 53) one can observe several similarities that suggest Redon was using these ghost prints as a source of inspiration. The popularity of this print was such that it was printed in the thousands. It is not surprising therefore that examples reached Paris by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As discussed above, Henri Vever possessed a copy in his collection as did Théodore Duret, who later donated his copy to the Bibliothèque Nationale (see Chapter II). Whereas it is doubtful that Redon understood the specific social intent of Kuniyoshi's original image we may certainly suggest that Redon might have read the image of the 'Earth Spider' as that of an allegorised monster, rather in the same way as Goya employed the imagery of bats and owls in his famous engraving *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* of 1818, and that Redon employed the image in his own work to reflect, using the means of allegory, upon the fears and uncertainties of developing modernity, grounded as it was in Positivist values.

One of the key similarities between the two works is that both spiders are anthropomorphic in nature; Kuniyoshi's spider has overly-large eyes that look down upon its prey, a human nose and a smile that shows human teeth. It also appears to have two arms. Redon's spider does retain more of its arachnid features (it does not have arms) yet it possesses ten rather than eight legs which could reference the ten fingers and ten toes of human body. Redon endows his spider with unnaturally large eyes, a

human nose and smiling mouth and teeth that closely parallels Kuniyoshi's spider. The composition of both pieces relies on a diagonal line flowing from the top right of each piece to the bottom left. Kuniyoshi's diagonal division is created by the sweeping divide between the foreground of reality and the background of the supernatural, stemming from the web woven by the Earth Spider as a means of capturing Minamoto Raikō. It seems possible that Redon may have simulated this diagonal using the body and legs of his spider. Redon has positioned the spider almost as if it is balancing; it rests only on its front three right legs with the remainder raised, creating the diagonal from the bottom left of the lithograph to the top right with the line of its front legs and the underside of its body. The stark pictorial division established in Redon's lithograph may work in a way similar to that found in Kuniyoshi's composition. In essence, two distinct spaces are established: those of reality, in the foreground, and the supernatural, in the background, which is filled with the form of the spider. The spider is obviously fantastical because, as Michelle Facos notes, of the way Redon has indicated the sheer size of the creature by placing the eyes of the spider at a level with those of the audience (Facos, 2009: 17). One may also argue that perhaps Redon gave his spider ten legs to clearly demonstrate the supernatural qualities of the creature.

There is also a possibility that Redon felt a sense of affinity with Kuniyoshi as an artist working at a time of social unrest with regard to governmental control. Both artists seem to have used their works to express their frustrations with their social situations. Kuniyoshi and his contemporaries within Japan were suffering under the oppressive Tempō Reforms of the Tokugawa shogunate and likewise Redon had lived through the social aftermath of the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) and then the consequences of the failure of the subsequent Paris Commune in 1871. Stephen Eisenman notes that it was in 1871 that Redon began to produce the drawings and lithographs that became known as the *Noirs*; Eisenman describes these works as "tragicomic allegories" suggesting that Redon deliberately used the *Noirs* as politically and socially satirical pieces (Eisenman, 1992: 76). Eisenman compares Redon's *La Bataille de os* (*The Battle of Bones*) of 1881 (Pl. 54) with popular political cartoons of the day that employed skeletons to satirise the recent conflicts<sup>8</sup> (Eisenman, 1992: 78-79). However, one could also suggest that, in addition to seeking inspiration from his contemporaries, Redon was inspired by the use of skeletal images in the Japanese ghost prints; such as those by Hokusai, Kuniyoshi or more likely perhaps, the frolicking



skeletons that fill the prints of Kawanabe Kyōsai, one of the students of Kuniyoshi who was much appreciated in late 19<sup>th</sup> century France and Britain (Pl. 55). Kyōsai was well known to the collector Emile Guimet, who visited him in Japan in 1876 and wrote about the artists in his memoirs (Guimet, 1878) as well as the British architect Josiah Conder (1852-1920), who became his student in 1877 later publishing the book *Paintings and Studies by Kawanabe Kyōsai* in 1911. Kyōsai's work was collected in the 1870s by the British collector William Anderson and his work was exhibited in France in the Japanese art exhibitions of 1883 and 1884 (See Gonse 1883a). There is a clear similarity in spirit to be found in the gay abandon with which both Redon's skeletons and those of Kyōsai disport themselves.

Other works by Redon raise interesting comparisons with the *yōkai* genre. The lithograph *Hantise (Obsession)* of 1894 (pl. 56), for example, exhibits strong similarities to the woodblock print by Kuniyoshi of *Onoe Kikugorō III as the ghost of Oiwa in Irohagana Yotsuya Kaidan* (1833) (Pl. 57). The latter is a print of the actor Onoe Kikugorō III playing the part of the ghost Oiwa in an adaptation of the story *Yotsuya kaidan (The Yotsuya Ghost Story)*<sup>9</sup>, whilst the former features a woman and three floating heads. The resemblance between these two pieces begins with the focus of each work upon a female character in profile; Redon's unknown lady appears to be engaged by something to the left of the piece, while Kuniyoshi's Oiwa appears to be drifting towards the right. Kuniyoshi has garbed his Oiwa in a pale Japanese kimono that pools at the bottom, obscuring her feet and Redon has chosen to dress his female in a white dress that drapes at the bottom concealing the feet of the unknown lady. Perhaps this was deliberate on the part of Redon as Japanese ghosts are predominantly female and more often depicted as appearing to be without feet. The background to Redon's lithograph also appears to echo that of Kuniyoshi's print in its impenetrable darkness that fades to a lighter foreground which, despite providing the viewer with a distinction between foreground and background nonetheless emphasises the two-dimensionality of the piece and immediately draws the eye to the profile of the female. We may also note that directly behind Kuniyoshi's ghost there floats a section of what appears to be folded fabric, expanding to a point to either side of Oiwa. This is comparable to the unusual way in which the dress of Redon's lady folds and drapes towards the bottom; the fabric of the dress appears to buckle around the knee and calf of the female, as though stopped by something unseen thus creating two points either side of the figure, in a similar

configuration and at similar height to the folds that float behind Kuniyoshi's figure of Oiwa. It may also be of interest to note that the title of Redon's lithograph *Hantise*, whilst conventionally translated as 'obsession' (Werner, 1969: xxi), more literally means 'the haunting' as in 'to be haunted ('obsessed') by thoughts of death'.

Perhaps the most obvious reference to a Japanese ghost print within Redon's lithograph *Hantise* are the floating heads that drift towards the female figure out of the blackness of the background. These creatures in Redon's lithograph are akin to the representations in many Japanese ghost prints of *rokuro-kubi*<sup>10</sup>, a *yōkai* of Japanese ghost lore that could separate its head from its body (more commonly known as a *nuke-kubi*), or elongate its neck to an unnatural length. Examples of the *rokuro-kubi* may be found represented in many ghost compendia, such as the Suushi scrolls (Pl. 4f), in the *ukiyo-e* tradition, as in Kuniyoshi's print *Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider* (Pl. 6), which Redon may have seen in private collections in Paris at the time and also in Hokusai's *manga* volumes where they make a regular appearance alongside other *yōkai* images. Indeed, Bouquillard & Marquet (2007: 132-133) have recently shown that Théodore Duret possessed one such *manga* album and have reproduced images from it (Pl. 33). We should note in respect of Redon that it was Duret who reviewed the Salon exhibition of 1870 in which Redon participated, and was benefactor and advocate of the Impressionist artists.

One such print from Duret's *manga* collection is of a *yūrei* (Pl. 58) and can be compared favourably to the lithograph *Éclosion (Blossoming)* of 1879, from Redon's series *Dans le rêve (In the Dream)* (Pl. 59). Hokusai's image represents a large head on a diminutive, even nonexistent, body that flies through the sky, not unlike Redon's image of a head dislocated from its torso, that seems to float in space. Redon's work may emulate the shock of straight, black hair, the profile portrait representing only one eye, an aquiline nose and half of the mouth visible that we find in the Hokusai. There is also a marked contrast between the paleness of the face and skin of both Hokusai's *yūrei* and Redon's floating head and the blackness of the hair.

Yet another interesting comparison is offered by Redon's lithograph *Le polype difforme flotait sur les rivages, sorte de Cyclope souriant et hideux (The misshapen polyp floated on the shores, a sort of smiling and hideous Cyclopes)* of 1883 (Pl. 60) (Werner, 1969: xvi;

plate 22). Whilst the title of Redon's lithograph clearly references 'a sort of Cyclops' it is clearly *not* the actual character of classical mythology that he intends to represent but rather something 'misshapen' that 'floats on the shores', something that the sea has washed-in. Redon describes his imaginary creature in the nearest applicable terms that he has available to him. Hokusai's *manga* imagery may well have been inspirational for Redon but so too might representations of one-eyed *yōkai* that are found throughout Japanese ghost iconography. We may cite, for example, the one-eyed *kappa* called *yamawaro* (Pl. 4c) and *yōkai hitotsume-kozō* and *hitotsume-nyūdō* (Pl. 61a) both represented in the picture scroll *Hyakkai Zukan* of 1737 (see Chapter 1). The 'misshapen polyps' found in Kuniyoshi's lexicon of ghosts, might also be advanced as the prototypes of Redon's figural distortions (Pl. 61b)

Redon repeatedly used the concept of a singular eye throughout his oeuvre. The eye depicted in the charcoal *After Reading a story by Edgar Poe* (or *The Eye*) (Pl. 62) has been attributed to being representative of one of two moments in the story *The Tell Tale Heart*, by Edgar Allan Poe: either the point at which the narrator is observing the old man through a crack in the door, before the murder takes place, or as representative of the moments after the murder, when the narrator has hidden the body of the old man beneath the floor boards (Gamboni, 2011: 111; 114). However, although this charcoal is certainly suggestive of Poe's influence, title notwithstanding, it may also bring to mind the Japanese *yōkai mokumoku-ren*, which are eyes that form in the rips of the paper partitions of the sliding Japanese doors (*shōji*).

This leads us to another theme that runs throughout Redon's works is Redon's ability to animate the inanimate by giving objects facial expressions and characteristics. An example that is often cited is Redon's lithograph *L'Oeuf* (*The Egg*) of 1885 (Pl. 63). Here the egg, made more domestic in nature by the inclusion of an egg-cup and appearing to be sitting on a table, has been given eyes by Redon, thus bringing it to life without changing its outward appearance. Redon's approach recalls the Japanese folk tradition that any inanimate objects have the potential to become inhabited by spirits, especially if the object in question was especially old and had remained unused over a longer period (Yamamoto, 1985). A good example of such case is that of *kasa-obake*, the umbrella *yōkai* which is often depicted as retaining its parasol shape but with the addition of one eye and one leg (Pl. 64a). The tradition of *kasa-obake* became so popular that it quickly

permeated *kabuki* theatre and many prints exist, such as that by Hiroshige (Pl. 64b) of actors playing the part (these are distinguishable by the figure being represented with two eyes).

Michelle Facos, in discussing Redon's *The Cactus Man*, 1881 (Pl. 65) suggests that "His conflation of animal and vegetable recalls the earlier works of Jean Grandville (1803–1847) and may be indebted to the displays of Africans and Oceanic natives at the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris." (Facos, 2009: 31). However one might also suggest that this charcoal of Redon's could have been influenced by ancient Japanese ghost stories which often involve the animation of inanimate objects. For example there is a tale known as *The Accomplished and Lucky Tea-Kettle* which features in A. B. Mitford's book *Tales of Old Japan*, originally published in 1871. The story tells of a tea-kettle belonging to a priest of the temple Morinji that could transform into a badger. The kettle was sold by the priest to a tinker who exhibited the kettle and its tricks, becoming a very rich man (Mitford/Redesdale, 1871/1910: 129-131). Daniel Gamboni also tells of a short story written by Redon entitled *Nuit de fièvre* (*Night of fever*); written in the first person, the story tells of a gentleman staying at an inn who becomes convinced during the night that a wooden chest in his room is haunted as he believes he can hear noises issuing from inside the chest. Gamboni attributes the inspiration for this story of Redon's as *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe (Gamboni, 2011: 109). While Redon's *Nuit de fièvre* is reminiscent stylistically of the suspense that Poe created with his *Tell-Tale Heart*, the notion of a monster hidden within a chest may also put one in mind of a Japanese tale called *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow*, which can again be found in *Tales of Old Japan*. This story tells of a basket full of monsters, given by a sparrow to an old woman, the very same old woman that had removed the sparrow's tongue for tasting her starching paste (Mitford/Redesdale, 1871/1910: 124-127).

Having considered Redon's highly unusual and personal approach to Symbolist imagery in relation to Japanese *yōkai* imagery we should finally draw attention to some of the unusual formal resolutions found in Japanese printmaking that might have affected Redon's mysterious images. In 1842 Kuniyoshi published a series of works that we now know as *Cat Homonyms*, in which images of cats form the names of various fish in *kana* script (Pl. 66). To the uninformed late-19<sup>th</sup> century eye, however, these amusing works must have presented something of spectral aspect, with the contorted images of cats-

cum-fish in a kind of free-fall down the picture space. Indeed, the prints demonstrate a particular technique that we often find in Kuniyoshi's work; to float apparently diverse images against the ground of the picture plane. The gradated plane of blues in these works calls forth an undersea context suitable to the depiction of fish, even though Kuniyoshi adopts the contorted figures of cats to form the *kana* names of different fish. Redon adopts a similar formal approach in many of his marine works such as *Different creatures inhabit the countries of the ocean* of 1896 in which strangely contorted figures emerge from the depths and hang suspended against the plane of the picture (Pl. 67). The technique creates a sense of the indeterminate since the images exist in an ill-defined and anonymous context and there seems little apparent connection between them.

Our conclusions at this juncture have to remain speculative until further research establishes the extent to which Redon had access to such imagery, but the visual parallels are compelling. If we are to accept the thesis that Redon was, indeed, inspired by the Japanese *yōkai* tradition, then Richard Hobbs' assessment is informative. He writes that "Redon's aim was to retain a viable link with the visible world whilst exploring the imaginary and visionary" (Hobbs, 1977: 20). Redon was an individual with an unsettled sense of self who existed, and worked, in an unsettled social climate. His early years moulded his distaste for the *bourgeois* lifestyle and his opposition to the Academic approach to art. Redon sought to elicit an emotional response from artist and audience with his work and Symbolism, with its search for the 'ideal' and its equal rejection of the *bourgeoisie* in favour of a more 'primitive' existence, provided Redon with the foundation from which to begin his "exploration of the imaginary". The Japanese prints and the *yōkai* tradition in particular may have offered Redon the inspiration to develop his early interest in the macabre. Redon's clear interest in the strange and unusual can be observed in his series of *Noirs*. In 1882 Redon created the series *A Edgar Poë (To Edgar Allan Poe)*, six lithograph works dedicated, seemingly, to the writer of fictional ghost stories Edgar Allan Poe; if Redon had such a clear interest in Poe's fictional horror writings, he would almost certainly have held an interest in the Japanese *yōkai* tales. The *Noirs* allude to Redon's desire to capture the fantastic, to create something that is recognisably based in reality but had another dimensionality placing it in the supernatural world. Further research is required to provide an evidential base for our conclusions but the visual evidence at least is sufficient to

suggest that Japanese *yōkai* prints may have provided Redon with the correct balance of being an art form that was far enough removed from the Academic style of art that he struggled to relate to; 'primitive' enough to appeal to Redon's desire to shun the materialism of the *bourgeoisie*; fantastical enough to appeal to his, as a Symbolist artist, search for a representation of the spiritual; and transient enough, as a representation of another world, to relate to Redon's inner lack of belonging.

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1. Odilon Redon (1840-1916) was born in Bordeaux in the April of 1840 and was actually baptised Bertrand-Jean Redon for his father Bertrand Redon however he was always known by the nick-name Odilon for his mother Marie, also known as Odile (Gamboni, 2011: 17-18).
2. Translated from the French by Dr. Anthony Parton:  
 "La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
 Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
 L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
 Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers." (Baudelaire, 1857).
3. Delacroix exhibited in the Salon exhibitions of March 1847 with *Le Christ en croix* (*Christ on the Cross*), 1846 and in March 1848 with *Le Christ au tombeau* (*The Entombment of Christ*), 1848 and *Mort de Valentin* (*The Death of Valentine*), 1847.
4. "I had a sickly childhood, and that is the reason why I was put into school late, at the age of eleven I think. This period is the saddest and most distressing of my youth. I was only a day-student, yet I recall myself late for classes, and working with an effort which grieved me. How many tears I shed upon boring books, which they ordered me to learn word for word. I think I can say that between eleven and eighteen I felt nothing but resentment toward studies." (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 11).
5. "I was tortured by the teacher [Gérôme]. Whether he recognized the sincerity of my serious disposition to study, or he saw a timid subject of good will, he visibly tried to impose his own manner of seeing and make me a disciple, or to make me disgusted with art itself [...]. The education that was given to me did not suit my nature. The teacher had of my most natural gifts the most obscure, the most entire misjudgement. He in no way understood me. I saw that his obstinate eyes were closed to what mine saw. Two thousand years of evolution or transformation in the manner of understanding optics are a mere trifle in comparison to the difference between our two opposite souls." (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 17-18).
6. Richard Hobbs attributes Stanislas Gorin as Redon's teacher in his book *Odilon Redon* (Hobbs, 1977: 11).
7. "I will never extol a school that, although commended for its good faith, limits itself to pure reality, without taking into account the past. To see and see well will always be the first precept of the art of painting; this is a truth of all times. But it is also important to know the nature of the eye that looks, to seek the cause of the feelings the artist experiences and communicates to the dilettante-if indeed there are any-in a word, to discover whether the gift he has made is of good nature, or well woven; and it is only once this work of analysis and criticism has been achieved that it is important to put the finished work in its place in the temple to Beauty that we have erected in our mind" (Redon, 1867-1915/Jacob & Wassermann, 1986: 44-45).
8. Eisenman refers to this work as *Interior with Skeletons*, 1870-1875, however this author has discovered it reference elsewhere as *La Bataille des os* (*The Battle of the Bones*) of 1881, located in the Kröller-Müller Museum.

9. See end note 2, Chapter I

10. *Rokuro-Kubi*

Approximately five hundred years ago there was a samurai, named Isogai Hēidazaemon Takétsura who became a travelling priest after the fall of the house of his master Lord Kikuji of Myūshū; henceforth he was known by his Buddhist name Kwairyō. One evening, on his travels through the mountains of the province of Kai, Kwairyō found a place to pass the night by the side of the road when he was seen by a woodcutter who warned Kwairyō about the ghosts in the area and thus invited him to spend the night in his nearby hut instead. Kwairyō was greeted so politely and properly by the residents of the little household that he correctly suspected that the woodcutter was a former samurai fallen on hard times. Kwairyō offered to recite the *sutras* for their past mistakes.

During the night Kwairyō went in search of a drink of water whereupon he, after entering the main room of the hut, saw all five members of the household asleep but without their heads. Kwairyō quickly realised that the bodies had not been decapitated while they slept but that his hosts were actually *rokuro-kubi*. Kwairyō recalled that to kill a *rokuro-kubi* one must remove the body to another location which will prevent the roaming head from re-attaching itself to its body; the distress of not being able to find its body will cause the separated head to strike itself upon the floor and die. Kwairyō thus dragged the body of the woodcutter outside into the woods. Here he overheard the heads of his hosts discussing their plan to return to the hut to eat him, once he had finished praying for them. When the head of the woodcutter discovered his missing body he flew into a rage, sought out Kwairyō in the woods and began to attack him. It attached itself to Kwairyō's sleeve where it remained after death from being beaten by Kwairyō in an attempt to release his arm. The four remaining *rokuro-kubi*, having been reunited with their bodies, fled the hut the following morning at the sight of Kwairyō (Hearn, 1904/2006: 55-63).

## Chapter V

### 'Soyez Mystérieuses': Gauguin, Ghosts & Yōkai

In this chapter we will explore not only the direct impact of Japanese ghost prints upon the work of Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) but also the possible indirect impact that the prints exerted upon him. Gauguin, like other members of his generation, the Symbolists, the emergent Theosophists and that new breed of specialist, the Comparative theologian, was interested in Syncretism: the idea that all faiths and religions could somehow be mapped one onto another, that all, despite their apparent difference, sprang from a common base in archaic forms of shamanism, and had something valid to offer to late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe which was perceived as spiritually bankrupt and in need of regeneration. Gauguin's mature works represented the conflation of many different cultures, faiths and religious ideas and Gauguin amalgamated different images and sources in order to eventually create his own specific branch of artistry. The focus of this chapter, then, reflects upon Gauguin's rejection of modernity, his search for the spiritual and the ways in which the Japanese ghost print may have aided Gauguin in his quest.

To understand Gauguin is to experience an individual thoroughly jaded by modernity and the Enlightenment values which underpinned it, having experienced life both inside and outside of *bourgeois* culture. Gauguin's early childhood was one of familial affluence juxtaposed with neighbouring deprivation having grown up on the vast and wealthy estate of Don Pio, his mother's uncle, in Peru. Gauguin, his mother Aline and his elder sister Fernande-Marcelline-Marie remained living with Don Pio for seven years from their arrival in 1849 until the death of Don Pio in 1856 whereupon the Gauguin family returned to Orléans in France<sup>1</sup> (Boudaille, 1964: 13; 15-16). The lifestyle of Gauguin when his family had settled back in France was considerably less luxurious than his childhood had been in Peru; he spent his late teens and early twenties (c.1865-1871) as a sailor in the navy after which he returned to Paris where he received, organised by his appointed guardian Gustave Arosa (Gauguin's mother had died in 1867) which Gauguin was at sea), a job as a clerk for a stock-broker, which ultimately developed into a successful and lucrative career for Gauguin (Boudaille, 1964: 17-22). However in 1882 the stock-exchange crashed leaving Gauguin in a position of financial instability



(Boudaille, 1964: 45-46). Whether because of or in spite of the stock-exchange crash in 1882 Gauguin made the decision to pursue a career as a painter, which ultimately led to abject poverty for the rest of his life and his abandonment of his family and of modern society in search of a more 'primitive' existence. Thenceforth he sought an existence not unlike that of the Peruvian culture in which he was raised until the age of seven, trying perhaps to rediscover the joys and innocence of a happy and carefree early childhood..

Gauguin's painting career began with a self-taught form of Impressionism that was honed by lessons from Pissarro, but just at the time when Impressionism and its dedication to optical reality was becoming less popular with artists, and Symbolism with its notion of using art to project one's emotions to the audience was gaining respect. During 1884 Gauguin had followed his wife and children to Copenhagen<sup>2</sup> where his wife had retreated largely due to their struggling financial situation. In Copenhagen Gauguin experienced a troubled and difficult existence; he struggled to be accepted by his wife's Danish relatives and was rejected socially, affecting his employment and his family's financial situation, as well as contributing to the early closure of a small exhibition of his works (Boudaille, 1964: 50-51; 58).

The consequence of this accumulation of rejection and financial failure was that Gauguin felt imprisoned by the monetary values of 'civilised' societies such as Copenhagen and Paris and he gives vivid expression to his views in his letters to his friends. In a letter to J.F. Willumsen written in the autumn of 1890 Gauguin writes:

"I am going soon to Tahiti, a small island in Oceania, where the material necessities of life can be had without money. I want to forget all the misfortunes of my past ... A terrible epoch is brewing in Europe for the coming generation: the kingdom of gold. Everything is putrefied, even men, even the arts." (Gauguin, in Chipp, 1968: 79).

Dorra suggests that Gauguin's early works, executed while living in Paris and Copenhagen, illustrated his desire to escape by the fact that Gauguin employed winged animals worked into the wallpaper of two paintings that depict Gauguin's sleeping children: *The Little One is Dreaming*, c.1881 (Pl. 68) and *Sleeping Child (or Clovis Asleep)*, 1884. Dorra proposes that the birds on the wallpaper in the former painting and the dragonfly on the wallpaper of the latter, combined with the sleeping children, are symbolic of Gauguin's dream (reflected in the illustration of his sleeping children) to

escape the *bourgeoisie* for a more 'primitive', innocent (reflected in the use of his young children) existence (Dorra, 2009: 22-25). Indeed, in a letter to Strindberg of 5 February 1895, Gauguin, talking of his last meeting with the playwright, recalls: "I had then the premonition of a revolt: the conflict between your civilisation and my barbarism. Civilisation from which you suffer; barbarism which is for me rejuvenation" (Gauguin, in Chipp, 1968: 82).

Gauguin was not the only artist in the late 1880s to be searching for a simpler existence and culture which might find expression in a more 'primitive', 'authentic' and expressive style of art. Pont-Aven in Brittany, had initially avoided overt modernisation and had preserved its rural charm (Perry, 1993: 8) and so Gauguin resolved to go there in search of "the dull, muted, powerful sound I am looking for in painting." (Gauguin, 1977:22). At the same time Japanese printmaking was admired and used as a source of inspiration by the artists that Gauguin would have met and socialised with in Pont-Aven because of the expressive two-dimensionality and strength of 'line' used to create the compositions of the prints. As Boudaille notes:

"The whole group at Pont-Aven looked upon the Japanese print as an example and an authority. They were all captivated by the expressive boldness of the stylisations, the purity of line and the powerful and dynamic outline of the shapes; here was a process that could be put to use. All that was needed was to adapt it to a western style" (Boudaille, 1964: 83).

The Japanese print appealed to the desire for the 'primitive' that was being sought by these Western artists in the Breton culture which, due to the influx of tourism, was slowly transforming into the modern community from which it was originally supposed to be a haven (Perry, 1993: 10). It was in Brittany, too, where Gauguin started to really develop his search for the spiritual by firstly turning to Catholicism and its archaic forms of visual expression. The painting *Yellow Christ* of 1889 (Pl. 69), for example, was based on a folk wood-carving of a large crucifix, painted a pale yellow, which hung in a chapel located just outside of Pont-Aven, known as the Trémalo chapel (Pl. 70) (Riding, 2010). What must have appealed to Gauguin, in basing his painting on this source, were its 'primitive', 'expressive' and hence 'authentic' qualities. However, other art forms exerted an impact upon Gauguin's rapidly developing mature style. These included *cloisonnisme*, a term used to describe the separation of colours one from another by a line, as found in enamelling stained glass and Japanese prints which manifested in the flattened picture spaces, the bright unmodulated colours, the decorative compositions

and stylised forms, the sinuous rhythms and the, the bold contours delineated by firm lines that also one finds in the Japanese print. These diverse sources came together to confer an 'awkward' somewhat rebarbative feel upon the painting which was then finished off by Gauguin's application of newspaper to the damp surface of the paint to give the work an aged and antique quality.

It was here in Brittany that Gauguin began to rediscover the spiritual and he gave full vent to it in his work using the theme to berate not only the materialism and secularism of his society as a whole but also the state sponsored secularism and anti-Catholicism of the Third Republic. It was in his pursuit of the spiritual and especially in his attempt to find a fitting means of expressing it, that Japanese prints, and especially the *yōkai* prints, may have come to Gauguin's aid. It is known that many artists acquainted with Gauguin possessed Japanese prints in their own private collections. The Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints were a particular influential source for the Impressionist artists (Boudaille, 1964: 38-39). Collectors of these prints included Edgar Degas (1834-1917) and Edouard Manet (1832-1883), alongside both of whom Gauguin had exhibited in the Impressionist Exhibitions of 1879, 1880 and 1881 (Dorra, 2009: 45). Gauguin had even admired Degas and Manet as artists enough to include some of their works in a selection of paintings and drawings he purchased when still working as a stockbroker (Boudaille, 1964: 32). What may have been the most significant collection of Japanese prints that Gauguin had been allowed access to would have been the collection owned by Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) discussed above (Chapter II). Van Gogh and his brother Theo Van Gogh (1857-1891), also an art dealer, had amalgamated a collection of Japanese prints large enough to be able to host an exhibition at the Café du Tambourin, Paris in 1887, the year before Gauguin travelled to Arles to stay with Van Gogh from October to December in 1888 (de Leeuw, 1991: 7). As noted above Van Gogh's collection contained several prints that alluded to Japanese mythology or represented overt *yōkai* themes. These may have caught Gauguin's attention as prints depicting Japanese mythology or *yōkai* would potentially satisfy, simultaneously, Gauguin's search for both the 'primitive' and 'superstitious', and hence the 'spiritual'.

As a way of expressing his appreciation of the spiritual Gauguin often employed images, colours and forms in an evocative and suggestive way. Like many avant-garde artists of his generation his work was symbolic but not in any conventional sense; the symbols

being deliberately rich and abstruse and possessing no clear-cut meanings. In this way the Symbolist generation preserved the mystery and enigma of their work and left their paintings and poems to work upon the imagination and the soul of the viewer and reader. The wood carving *Soyez mystérieuses (Be Mysterious)*, 1890 (Pl. 71) has traditionally been understood as relating to Symbolism, Tahitian culture (despite being created before Gauguin had travelled to Tahiti) and spiritualism. For instance, the Musée d'Orsay in their description of the carving suggest the influences of Buddhism from the raised hand gesture of the female figure on the left of the piece, Egyptian art from the eye of the head on the upper right of the piece and Art Nouveau from the sinuous plant formations that begins in the lower right of the piece ([www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr)) . However one could also consider both the influence of Japanese prints in general upon this work as well as the influence of Japanese ghost prints in particular. The undulating plant design that runs in relief throughout the piece is redolent of the Japanese decorative line whilst the long hair of the figure to the left, its unnaturalistically coloured, distorted and ghostly face, and the way in which it ascends in a curve from a point is reminiscent of Japanese *yūrei* such as the work by Kunisada in Van Gogh's collection (Pl. 25). The strange head to the right of the composition recalls those 'floating heads' of the *nuke-kubi* or the *rokuro-kubi*.

There is evidence of the influence of Japanese art in Gauguin's work as early as 1886 with the oil painting *Still Life with Horse's Head*, 1886 (Pl. 72) where Gauguin has included, in the background at least two examples of an *uchiwa* (Japanese hand-held fan that is flat, not folded). Japanese artists such as Utagawa Kuniyoshi and Andō Hiroshige (1797-1858) engaged with *uchiwa-e* (prints that appear on *uchiwa*) (Schlombs, 2007: 50-51; [www.kuniyoshiproject.com](http://www.kuniyoshiproject.com)). In addition, Gauguin's painting *Still-life with Japanese Fan* of 1886-1887 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) features not a Japanese fan exactly, but a semi-circular Japanese fan print (a print designed to be cut out and stuck to a folding fan). It is possible that Gauguin himself possessed a collection of Japanese prints as several of his paintings include such prints in their composition; *Nature Morte à l'estampe Japonaise (Still Life with Japanese Print)*, 1888 (Pl. 73), as sold by the auction house Christie's in 2003, features a Japanese *ukiyo-e* print in the background that has been identified by J. de Rotonchamp as being part of Gauguin's own collection ([www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)). A further indication that Gauguin was using specific Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints as inspiration can be seen in the painting *Nature Morte à l'estampe*

*Japonaise (Still Life with Japanese Print)*, 1889 (Pl. 74) in which Gauguin has included an exact replica of a print by Utagawa Yoshiiku (1833-1904), 1864 of the *kabuki* character Nagohe, the hunter, as played by the actor Ichikawa Kodanji (Pl. 75) (Faulkner, 2010).

There is also a clear representation of a Japanese print in *The Schuffenecker Family* or *Schuffenecker's Studio*, 1889 (Pl. 76). Gauguin's use of flat, unmodulated colour and his close cropping of the image of the image also demonstrates that Gauguin had begun to use *japonisme* (the use of Japanese print techniques) as well as *japoniserie* (the use of Japanese imagery) in his works. The interest of Gauguin in the formal features of the Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints is evident when one compares his painting *Vision After the Sermon: Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*, 1888 (Pl. 77) with the print *Hodogaya, Totsuka, Fujisawa and Hiratsuka*, c. 1835 from the series *Tokaido gojisan-eki yon shuku meisho (Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō Road)* by Kuniyoshi (Pl. 78); Gauguin, like Kuniyoshi, has divided his painting along the diagonal using the trunk of a tree. This division serves a dual purpose, to emulate the techniques of what was considered a simpler art, satisfying Gauguin's desire to represent the 'primitive' through his art; and also to separate what he has described as "imaginary" from reality. To the left of the tree Gauguin has painted the Breton women having listened to the sermon of the priest and to the right Gauguin has depicted the Angel fighting with Jacob, denoting the "imaginary"; the heads of the Breton women and the priest are bowed, and their eyes are closed in contemplation of the sermon to suggest that Gauguin is relating the imagination of the Breton people (Bodelesen, 1964: 182). Dorra also suggests that the priest could, in fact, be a self-portrait of Gauguin and suggests that Gauguin represents himself here as teacher and prophet, with the Breton people as his students: "Gauguin the creative artist is as effective in arousing the aesthetic interest of the untutored masses as is Gauguin the village-priest in arousing their religious feelings" (Dorra, 2009: 113).

In exploring the thin veil between the material and the spiritual worlds Gauguin may have also been influenced by Japanese prints; *yōkai* prints in particular would have proven an interesting inspiration because of their obvious interaction between the worlds of the supernatural and the real. In Gauguin's oil on canvas *Still Life with Onions, Beetroot and a Japanese Print*, 1889 (Pl. 79), the stem of an onion appears to bleed seamlessly into what becomes the arm of the female figure in the depicted Japanese

print to the right hand side of the painting, creating an almost physical connection between the material and spiritual worlds, an illusionary bridge as it were between the two.

The portrayal of the spiritual and reality in the same image, but separated by a thin veil or barrier, is a recurrent feature of the Japanese ghost print, as previously demonstrated with the examples *Kohada Koheiji* (Pl. 10) from the series *Hyaku Monogatari* by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and *Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider*, 1843 by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (Pls. 6a-d); this compositional feature was a formal innovation of the ghost prints for their time. Hokusai, in the print *Warai Hannya*<sup>3</sup>, another from the series *Hyaku Monogatari* (Pl. 80), demonstrates this sectioning of the supernatural by using a crescent arc as the divisional line which is comparable with Gauguin's oil on wood *Self Portrait*, 1889 (Pl. 81) where Gauguin has also used an arc to divide the painting. Gauguin, like Hokusai, has chosen to feature only his own head and hands in the painting, with his right pointing to the head of a snake, in a similar gesture to the left hand of *Warai Hannya* that is pointing to the child's head; Gauguin also appears to have elongated his head and features, and has faced his head in the same direction, akin to that of *Warai Hannya*; reminiscent of the round head of the baby held in the right hand of *Warai Hannya* are the apples to the right of Gauguin's head. Although there are formal similarities to be observed between the two works, there is, perhaps, a stronger suggestion of Gauguin encompassing the essence of the Japanese ghost print and the allusion to the supernatural encroaching upon reality through the use of a sectional composition.

A recurring image used by Gauguin across his entire oeuvre is that of the fox; it appears in the wood carvings *Soyez amoureuses vous serez heureuses* (*Be In Love You Will Be Happy*), 1889 (Pl. 82), and in the wooden panel *Soyez mystérieuses* (*Be Mysterious*) belonging to the set *Maison du jour* (*House of Pleasure*) of 1901-1902 (Pls. 83a & b), there is also a fox carved in relief onto the side of a ceramic jug in the shape of a head (Pl. 84), and most memorably there is a fox painted into Gauguin's oil on canvas *The Loss of Virginity*, 1890-1891 (Pl. 85). Conventionally the fox in Gauguin's work has been referenced as a "symbol of perversity", even by Gauguin himself in a letter to Van Gogh of 10-13 November 1889, when describing the carving *Soyez Amoureuses*, 1889: "...and a fox, the prophetic animal of perversity among the Indians" (cited in Thomson, 2010:

162). However one could consider the importance of the fox within Japanese folklore, and subsequently its appearance within many of the *yōkai* prints. Amongst the Japanese prints in Van Goghs' collection there is a *nishiki-e*, *ōban* print that illustrates *kitsune-bi* (fox fire) along with the actor Nakamura Shikan VI in the role of a *kitsune* (fox demon) (see Appendix II, Chapter I) which is entitled *The actor Nakamura Shikan as Minamoto (no) Kurō Kitsune* (Pl. 86) (van Rappard-Boon, van Gulik & van Bremen-Ito, 2006: 227, pl. 315). There are aspects surrounding the character of the *kitsune* that may have been attractive to Gauguin; initially that *kitsune* are shape-shifters, they can traditionally take a human form and exist amongst unsuspecting humans (Meyer, 2012: 176). There are many Japanese stories that feature *kitsune* living as humans, one such story is depicted in a print from the series *Thirty-Six Ghosts* by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892) called *Kusunoha-gitsune doji ni wakaruru no zu* (*The Fox-Woman Kusunoha Leaving Her Child*)<sup>4</sup>, 1890 (Pl. 87). This print portrays the moment at which the beautiful Kusunoha is transforming back into a fox, illustrated by the silhouette, as seen through a paper screen, of a fox's face and paw, rather than the expected profile of a woman (Stevenson, 1983: 58-59). The print *Kusunoha-gitsune doji ni wakaruru no zu* is another demonstration of the Japanese concept of the contiguity between the real and the supernatural, the division between the two worlds illustrated in this print by an object as insubstantial and ordinary as a paper screen door. The appeal of *kitsune* as shape-shifters, and thus as a representation of the symbiotic relationship between the real and the supernatural as demonstrated by a single being that could be simultaneously supernatural (as a fox) and real (as a human), may have interested Gauguin in his attempt to evoke the mysterious. Further prints that feature *kitsune* by Kuniyoshi include *Princess Yaegaki* (Pl. 88), and *Otome (Maiden)* from the series *Waken nazorae Genji* (*Japanese and Chinese Comparisons for the Chapters of the Genji*), 1855 (Pl. 89); the *kitsune* featured in the latter print is actually a *kyūbi no kitsune*, which is a powerfully magical *kitsune* with white fur and nine tails, a transformation that befalls a *kitsune* after one thousand years of existence (Meyer, 2012: 176). The presence of *kitsune* narratives in literature that may have been accessible to Gauguin can be found in Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan* in which Mitford records two fox tales: *The Foxes' Wedding* which tells the story, as though they were human characters, of the wedding ceremony of two young foxes; and *The Grateful Foxes* which tell the story of a man whose son is saved from illness by the actions of a stranger who, unbeknownst to the man, is a fox transformed as a human (Mitford, 1871/2012: 155; 205-209).

The theme of transformation in Gauguin's work is an important one and has recently been the focus an exhibition entitled *Gauguin: Metamorphoses*, which took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York during 2014. The works featured in the exhibition included a series of prints and transfer drawings made by Gauguin in the period 1889-1903 and it is the transfer drawings which encapsulate this essence of a transformational state. Lotte Johnson, the Curatorial Assistant for the museum's Department of Drawings and Print, in a text written to accompany the exhibition, describes Gauguin's use of a conglomerate of sources and mediums for his works and his tendency to replicate and re-work his pieces as a manifestation of his desire to demonstrate transformation through his work. The technique of oil transfer drawings was one developed by Gauguin during his time in Tahiti; it involves placing a layer of oil paint between two sheets of paper and then drawing, with a sharp pencil, onto the top sheet (known as the *verso* side), thus allowing the under-layer of paint to transfer to the underside (the *recto*) of the top sheet giving two separate effects of the same piece:

“With this technique, Gauguin was able to almost magically transform and obfuscate his images. The exquisitely detailed pencil drawing, executed with clarity on the *verso*, undergoes a sort of metamorphosis to engender the mysterious print on the *recto*. Gauguin was enchanted with this process, with the way it transformed the texture of his lines and introduced an element of chance into the creative process. The incidental markings, blurred lines, and earthy tones of the transfer suggest an image unearthed from a lost time.” (Johnson, 2014: [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)).

A piece specifically highlighted by Johnson as one of the exhibition's most “extraordinary works” in relation to metamorphosis across Gauguin's works is the oil transfer drawing *Tahitian Woman with Evil Spirit*, c.1900 (Pl. 90a). Johnson notes that this oil transfer was directly inspired by a photograph, from Gauguin's personal collection, of a young girl native to Tonga, another Polynesian island, and a wooden bust of his own work *Head with Horns*, 1895-1897 (Pl. 90b), (Johnson, 2014). While Gauguin has very clearly used *Head with Horns* as the source from which to re-work the ‘Evil Spirit’ in *Tahitian Woman with Evil Spirit* both the original sculpture and the subsequent drawing are suggestive of the horned *yōkai*, known as *oni*, from Japanese folklore (see Appendix II, Chapter I). Japanese prints that illustrate a story containing an *oni* often depict the *oni* as sneaking up behind the protagonist, or the hero, in the moment just prior to their attack, where the hero usually successfully defeats the demon. The Japanese print artist Yoshitoshi illustrates three such scenarios in his series *Thirty-Six Ghosts: Sadanobu-ko yoru kyochu*



*ni kai o osoreshimu no zu* (*Sadanobu Threatening a Demon in the Palace at Night*), 1889 (Pl. 91); *Omori Hikoshichi michi ni kaii ni au zu* (*Omori Hikoshichi Encountering a Demon*), 1889; and *Shoki muchu ni oni o toraeru no zu* (*Shoki Capturing a Demon in a Dream*), 1890 (Stevenson 1983: 21; 27; 45). Gauguin has chosen in *Tahitian Woman with Evil Spirit* to place the 'Evil Spirit' behind the 'Tahitian Woman', perhaps as a reflection of his disappointment at the encroaching corruptive forces of European modernity upon the 'primitive' traditions, as he conceived them, of Tahitian culture. In the background of this drawing and transfer piece there is once again the use of an arc, not dissimilar to the arc as referenced in the print *Warai Hannya*, which may have been used by Gauguin to represent the doorway between the supernatural world and that of reality.

The sculpture *Head With Horns* is also represented in Gauguin's sketchbook *Noa Noa* in which he collected watercolours, sketches, drawings and photographs that he found inspirational<sup>5</sup> (Pl. 92). Included in *Noa Noa* are many references to Japanese prints and drawings: folios 121 and 122 depict Gauguin's drawings of *personnage japonais* (Japanese characters) (Pl. 93a & b); folio 124 includes a small copy of the woodblock print *Fujiwara no Sanekata and Sparrows* from the *Manga* series by Hokusai (Pl. 94a & b) ([www.arts-graphiques.louvre.fr](http://www.arts-graphiques.louvre.fr) [folio 121; 122; 124]). These folios show that Gauguin was influenced by Japanese art and Japanese culture; that a manga print is specifically referenced suggests that Gauguin was interested in Hokusai's work. Japanese *yōkai* prints may have therefore formed part of the corpus of sources from which Gauguin derived his inspiration. *Noa Noa* was created by Gauguin upon his return to France after his first visit to Tahiti and was a combination of text and illustration intended as a narrative of his experiences during this first excursion to Tahiti; it provided the context for his most recent works and also included references to Tahitian folk tales (Thomson, 2010: 192). In this way the *Noa Noa* reminds one of the Japanese collections of folktales known as *monogatari*, which combined Japanese prints with the narrative of the story, such as *Ugetsu Monogatari: Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, a compilation of Japanese supernatural tales by Ueda, Akinari (1734–1809). Gauguin may have intended *Noa Noa* as a recreation of Tahitian mythology using the format of the Japanese *monogatari*; his own woodcut story-book about the spiritual world, another attempt to merge the supernatural with the reality. The front cover of *Noa Noa* is comparable to those of such Japanese *ehon* (picture books) or *yomihon* (novels based on a pre-existing tale, often

featuring magical characters such as witches or fairy princesses), where it was usual for the covers to include images, akin to the way in which Gauguin has presented his front cover for *Noa Noa*, an example can be seen in the front cover of one of the 98 volumes of the *yomihon*, *Nanso Satomi hakken den*, printed between 1814 and 1841 (Pl. 95a & b).

Alongside these artistic techniques is also the use of figural distortion within the works of Gauguin which reflects this transformational state between reality and the supernatural. The oil on wood *Portrait of Jacob Meyer de Haan*, 1889 (Pl. 96) demonstrates such distortion; here Gauguin has elongated the face of Meyer de Haan and there is a similarity to the horns of an *oni* in the way Gauguin has chosen to shape the hair of Meyer de Haan; once again there is also a dividing line, represented in this piece by the edge of the table, potentially illustrating the separation of reality (the table-top containing the books, apples and lamp) from the spiritual (expressed through the distorted, almost demonic, features of Meyer de Haan). A further example of figural distortion by Gauguin can be seen in the stoneware figure *Oviri*, c.1894 (Pl. 97a & b). Yeon Shim Chung in an essay on “The Monstrous and the Grotesque: Gauguin’s Ceramic Sculpture” for the e-journal *Image & Narrative* describes *Oviri* as an expression of the savage side of femininity as well as the perfection of androgyny; the article identifies the strange opening at the back of the sculpture as an expression of a “vaginal orifice” as well as suggesting that Gauguin intended the opening to be viewed as a cave from which the ‘primitive’ figure is born (Shim Chung, 2008)<sup>6</sup>. However, the distorted form and pose of *Oviri*, which arises like smoke from the ground, steadily billowing out from diminutive feet, with its arms bent at the elbow and with hands pointing downwards, may also be likened to the prints of the *yōkai* tradition. The opening at the back of the sculpture is also suggestive that the outer representation on the front is insubstantial and ghostly, a transformational form in the tradition of Japanese *yōkai* such as *kitsune*. The Musée d’Orsay cites the animal form at the feet of the figure as a she-wolf however the animal head also bears a resemblance to the head of a fox ([www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr) [Gauguin]). While Gauguin may not be directly referencing these Japanese *yōkai* within his works it is possible that they influenced his pieces indirectly. Where Gauguin does, as Shim Chung notes, indicate a specific fictional character in reference to a drawing of *Oviri* taken from his journal *Le Sourire*, it is also possible that Gauguin intended the figure of *Oviri* to represent several layers of meaning drawn together from several different sources, as was typical of his work<sup>6</sup>.

Further evidence of Gauguin's interest in the supernatural is suggested by Dorra who cites the article "Transmigration of Life-Atoms" written by Hélène P. Blavatsky in 1883 for *The Theosophist* (Dorra 2009, 48; 287). We know that the writings of Blavatsky and of other members of the Theosophical Society were of importance to many Symbolist artists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, not least, Gauguin's school of acolytes, the Nabis as well as members of the Salon de la Rose+Croix. Within her article Blavatsky explains that the belief of "the occultist" is that all atoms that make up organic or inorganic matter contain life, and that these life-atoms form the soul; thus suggesting that all objects, whether animate or inanimate, contain a form of a soul:

"Life is ever present in the atom of matter, whether organic or inorganic, conditioned or unconditioned - a difference that the occultists do not accept. Their doctrine is that life is as much present in the inorganic as in the organic matter: when life-energy is active in the atom, that atom is organic; when dormant or latent, then the atom is inorganic. Therefore, the expression "life-atom" though apt in one sense to mislead the reader, is not incorrect after all, since occultists do not recognise that anything in nature can be inorganic and know of no "dead atoms," whatever meaning science may give to the adjective. The alleged law of Biogenesis is the result of the ignorance of the man of science of occult physics. It is accepted because the man of science was hitherto unable to find the necessary means to awaken into activity dormant life in what he terms an inorganic atom: hence the fallacy that a living thing can only be produced from a living thing, as though there ever was such a thing as dead matter in Nature!" (www.katinkahesselink.net: 112-113; Blavatsky, 1883: 286-288).

There are two aspects to this quote that may have appealed to Gauguin, the first is the notion of the potential for the spiritual to be resident in everything from humans to objects; the second is Blavatsky's criticism of science and the refusal of science to accept the spiritual, which may have resonated with Gauguin's feelings of disappointment towards modern society.

Dorra identifies references to Hinduism and reincarnation in Blavatsky's article but also suggests that the philosophies of Blavatsky may not have been the only foundation from which Gauguin formed his opinions on the spiritual and supernatural (Dorra, 2009: 34; 287). We may propose that Blavatsky's theory on the presence of a soul within any object is not dissimilar to the Japanese belief of the potential for the formation of a soul within an inanimate object, known as *tsukumogami*; thus the approach of Japanese culture to the formation of an integrated existence between the spiritual world and

reality may have appealed to Gauguin's curiosity for the spiritual and the supernatural. Again, discussion at this stage is necessarily speculative but a case can be made for researching the impact of the Japanese *yōkai* tradition upon Gauguin, his work and his syncretist ideology in more depth.

Gauguin's pursuit of the spiritual became an especial focus after his initial move to Tahiti in 1891 and his profound disillusionment regarding the 'authenticity' of his supposed 'Garden of Eden'. Within days of Gauguin's arrival the last Tahitian King, Pomaré V, had died which meant that Tahiti became a colony of France, and thus fell under French control. There were already many Western missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, who had settled here, along with a French military presence which had diluted significantly, with a European attitude, the 'authenticity' that Gauguin had travelled to experience (Boudaille, 1964: 157). Gauguin himself, in his journal *Noa Noa*, wrote:

"Life at Papeete soon became a burden. It was Europe – the Europe which I had thought to shake off – and that under the aggravating circumstances of colonial snobbism, and the imitation, grotesque even to the point of caricature, of our customs, fashions, vices and absurdities of civilization [sic]. Was I to have made this far journey, only to find the very thing which I had fled? [...] A profound sadness took possession of me. The dream which had brought me to Tahiti was brutally disappointed by the actuality. It was the Tahiti of former times which I loved. That of the present filled me with horror." (Gauguin, 1897 / Theis, 1957: 9; 18).

Gauguin was therefore faced with the cultural reality of a Tahiti that did not equal his expectations of the anticipated exotic "primitive paradise"<sup>7</sup> (Perry, 1993: 28). This disappointment inspired Gauguin to invent his own imaginative narrative about the spirituality of Tahiti and influence of the *yōkai* prints may have provided for him a framework within which to achieve this personal interpretation and explore the spiritual. The oil on canvas *Manao Tupapau* (*The Spirit of the Dead Watches*), 1892 (Pl. 98) by Gauguin is a painting that encompasses a variety of sources and interpretations. Formally, as Gill Perry suggests, the positioning and the nakedness of the young girl on a bed, her ankles crossed, is redolent of Manet's *Olympia* of 1863, (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) and also Gauguin's own *Loss of Virginity* of 1891 (Norfolk, Virginia, Chrysler Museum of Art) which is suggestive of a connection to Paris and the memory of the works produced by Impressionist and Symbolist painters in deliberate opposition to the Academic standards of the time (Perry, 1993: 34). The alleged event which inspired this painting

occurred when Gauguin, having returned to his hut, from a day's leave, found his Tahitian companion lying on the bed in a state of fear because the lamp had extinguished and she had been left in the dark. Gauguin quotes, in recounting the experience, his interpretation of the fear of the young Tahitian girl and his assumption that this was a consequence of her fear of the dark, which was connected to the Tahitian belief in *Tupapaüs* spirits that inhabit the dark:

"When I opened the door I saw with a sinking heart that the light was extinguished. [...] Quickly, I struck a match, and I saw...Tehura, immobile, naked, lying face downward flat on the bed with the eyes inordinately large with fear. [...] A contagion emanated from the terror of Tehura. I had the illusion that a phosphorescent light was streaming from her staring eyes. [...] And then in this half-light which was surely peopled for her with dangerous apparitions and terrifying suggestions, I was afraid to make any movement which might increase the child's paroxysm of fright. [...] Might she not with my frightened face take me for one of the demons and spectres, one of the *Tupapaüs* [...]? [...] The intensity of fright which had dominated her as the result of the physical and moral power of her superstitions had transformed her into a strange being [...]" (Gauguin, 1897/Theis, 1957: 76-77)<sup>8</sup>.

This focus, in Gauguin's writing, on the fear of Tehura, the superstitious source of this fear and the transformative powers of this fear demonstrate Gauguin's desire to construct a potent mythology within reality. To Gauguin, the transformation of Tehura into an unrecognisable individual as a result of her fear could also be reminiscent of the transformative powers of Japanese ghosts. Gauguin translates this experience into his painting by constructing an imaginary Tahitian mythology in which the spirit world and reality are intertwined, again as in the *yōkai* prints: the real figure of the young Tahitian girl, on the bed, in the foreground with the 'ghost' figure in the background, separated but connected by the undulating silhouette of the bed-clothes. Gauguin himself, in a letter to his wife, Mette, interpreting for her the context of the painting, emphasises the mixture of reality with the imagined in the work and also his use of a simple style (or his desire for a simple display of the piece) to reflect the "primitive, childlike" subject matter:

"...There are a few flowers in the background but they mustn't be real, since they are imagined. I make them look like sparks. The Kanakas think that the phosphorescences [*sic*] of the night are the souls of the dead and they believe in this and are afraid. To finish up, I do the ghost very simply, a small figure of a woman; because the girl, not familiar with the French spiritist theatres, can't help seeing the actual dead person, that is, a person like herself, linked to the spirit of the dead. [...] the painting has to be done very simply since the subject matter is primitive, childlike. December 8, 1892, Tahiti." (Guérin, 1996: 64).

Gauguin, as both an artist and as an individual existing within the changing society of the newly industrialised later-19<sup>th</sup> century France, felt deceived by modernity. As with many artists of the time he felt that modern society with its emphasis on the utility, standardisation, industry, capitalism, rigid class divisions, artificial social mores and conventions and crass materialism lacked the soul and spirituality of what he considered to be a more vibrant and 'authentic' 'primitive' culture. Gauguin, throughout his career as a painter, was searching for the spiritual and the supernatural which he believed could not be found within the confines of a *bourgeois* lifestyle. This desire for a more 'primitive' existence and a more 'authentic' culture, we may argue, is what attracted Gauguin to the Japanese prints that he discovered in the collections of many of his fellow artistic contemporaries. Gauguin was clearly influenced by Japanese prints and Japanese *objets d'art* in his overt use of *japonaiserie*; by the inclusion of Japanese prints and fans in his early still-life paintings as well as references in his sketch book *Noa Noa* to Japanese prints and figures. In addition we may note many formal borrowings from Japanese prints that are evident in his works. Gauguin's was one of the key artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to employed *japonisme*. More speculatively, but more specifically related to the *yōkai* genre of Japanese prints, is Gauguin's repeated use of an arc as a divisional line, akin to that displayed in Hokusai's print *Warai Hannya*. His unnerving deformations of the human figure, his references to ghosts and spirits of the dead in his later work, his use of fox imagery throughout his *oeuvre*, is interest in the contiguity of the natural and supernatural worlds and the theme of transformation within his works, all suggest that *yōkai* imagery and the supernatural aspect of Japanese folklore played a role in his practice and thinking. This exploration, then, speculative though it is, suggests that a case clearly exists for more detailed research in order to establish a more tangible and substantial connection between Gauguin and the *yōkai* imagery of Japanese folklore.

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1. Paul Gauguin's mother and father, Aline and Clovis Gauguin, decided to relocate to Peru in 1849 with their children, daughter Fernande-Marcelline-Marie and son Paul; sadly Clovis Gauguin died during the journey. While in Peru the two children and their mother stayed with Aline's maternal uncle Don Pio, of the Tristan Morosco family, for seven years until the death of Don Pio in 1856. Aline was not named as a beneficiary, despite Don Pio having previously provided for her in his will, due to other members of Don Pio's family convincing him to alter his will while Aline was back in Orléans, France attending to her own father's estate (Boudaille, 1964: 13; 15-16).

2. Gauguin's wife was Mette Sophie Gad. Mette was Danish, from Copenhagen, and had met Gauguin in 1872 on a trip to Paris with a friend; they were married in Paris in November of 1873 (Boudaille, 1964: 27-28).
3. Warai Hannya, also known as the Laughing Demoness or Ogress, was an old woman believed to have transformed into a *yama-uba*\* after suffering from intense jealousy. This particular *yama-uba* is thought to prey upon small infants and babies. Warai Hannya is often depicted as horned, possibly because a *hannya* is a form of horned *oni* mask used in Noh theatre ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov); [www.blog.artic.edu](http://www.blog.artic.edu); [www.matthewmeyer.net](http://www.matthewmeyer.net)).  
(\*see Appendix II, Chapter I)
4. While the nobleman Abe no Yasuna was reciting poetry to himself in some temple gardens a fox, fleeing from a group of men giving chase with the aim of catching it for the medicinal properties of its liver, stopped by his feet. Abe used his robes to hide the fox from the pursuing men. He then went on to marry the beautiful Kusunoha and they had a son together but after three years Kusunoha sadly died or disappeared. However shortly after her disappearance/death Kusunoha appeared to Abe in a dream explaining that she was the fox that he had saved from death that day in the garden of the temple (Stevenson, 1983: 58).
5. A comprehensive selection of which can be found in the inventory of the département des Arts graphiques (the department of graphic arts) for the Musée du Louvre ([www.arts-graphiques.louvre.fr](http://www.arts-graphiques.louvre.fr) [folio 30])
6. Yeon Shim Chung notes that Gauguin references directly, as related to a drawing of the figure *Oviri*, the fictional character Séraphîtus Séraphîta from the novel *Séraphîta* by Honoré de Balzac: "Here, the new body designates the birth of an androgynous séraphîtus séraphîta in the context of Symbolist literature and the birth of a new man, a savage, combining the two. This becomes clearer in the drawing of *Oviri* in the monthly satirical journal *Le Sourire*, which first appeared on August 21, 1899. The drawing includes the following inscription: "The monster, strangling its creation, fertiliz[es] with its semen a generous womb to engender séraphîtus séraphîta." The phrase is tightly bound up with the Swedenborgian novel *Séraphîta* by Honoré de Balzac about the life and death of an impeccable, angelic being, an androgyne." (Shim Chung, 2008).
7. Gill Perry cites the example of *Le Mariage de Loti* (*The Marriage of Loti*) written by Pierre Loti, 1880 (Perry, 1993: 28). The novel is a fictional tale based on Loti's (pseudonym of Julien Viaud) own experiences in Tahiti; the story tells of the love affair between an English naval officer (Harry Grant) and a Tahitian girl from Papeete (Rarahu), idealising the lifestyle of Papeete in Tahiti: "[...] the view of Papeete is enchanting. All the golden-tinted verdure had a magical beauty in the evening sunlight" (Loti/Bell, 1880/1925: 157).
8. "I had to go to Papeete for a day. I had promised to return the same evening, but the coach which I took left me half way, and I had to do the rest on foot. It was one o'clock in the morning when I returned. When I opened the door I saw with a sinking heart that the light was extinguished. This in itself was not surprising, for at the moment we had only very little light. The necessity of renewing our supply was one of the reasons for my absence. But I trembled with a sudden feeling of apprehension and suspicion which I felt to be a presentiment – surely, the bird had flown...Quickly, I struck a match, and I saw...Tehura, immobile, naked, lying face downward flat on the bed with the eyes inordinately large with fear. She looked at me, and seemed not to recognise me. As for myself I stood for some moments strangely uncertain. A contagion emanated from the terror of Tehura. I had the illusion that a phosphorescent light was streaming from her staring eyes. Never had I seen her so beautiful, so tremulously beautiful. And then in this half-light which was surely people for her with dangerous apparitions and terrifying suggestions, I was afraid to make any movement which might increase the child's paroxysm of fright. How could I know what at that moment I might seem to her? Might she not with my frightened face take me for one of the demons and spectres, one of the Tupapaüs, with which the legends of her race people sleepless nights? Did I really know who in truth she was herself? The intensity of fright which had dominated her as the result of the physical and moral power of her superstitions had transformed her into a strange being, entirely different from anything I had known heretofore" (Gauguin, 1897/Theis, 1957: 76-77).

## **Chapter VI**

### **Yōkai Reflections in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Design**

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century art movement known as Art Nouveau came to dominate the world of avant-garde design as surely as its sister movement, Symbolism, occupied the creative attentions of avant-garde painters, writers and composers. Although Art Nouveau developed organically from the pre-existent Arts and Crafts movement, established first in in England by William Morris in the 1860s in an attempt to resist the spiritual corrosion of modernity and the anonymity and lack of quality fostered by industrial processes; the course of its development owed much to Symbolist ideology and practice. In graphic, textile and interior design as well as architecture, Art Nouveau reflected and further entrenched the Symbolist love of reverie, imagination, ambiguity and the of world of the *au delà*. For Art Nouveau designers and architects the poster, the textile, wallpaper, table, chair and even the building and the very space which it sculpted was thought of as a portal to another world, lying far beyond that which many considered to be the banal and empty world of post-Enlightenment modernity. Consequently, Art Nouveau designers and architects celebrated the surprising, the suggestive, the bizarre and the unconventional as means of contesting the stagnant forces of logic, rationality and efficiency which had come to dominate European life at the time of the *fin de siècle*. Art Nouveau embodied a desire for something fundamentally *new*.

The decorative fashion that was in vogue at the time that Art Nouveau developed was geared around what Duncan calls a *horror vacui* that demanded that all space had to be filled somehow, no matter how:

“It was in part this Victorian pre-occupation with a cluttered eclecticism - its *horror vacui* and outmoded taste - that in the 1890s opened the door to the concepts of modern interior design through which Art Nouveau advanced one of its own causes, that of neat and coherent settings for the home” (Duncan, 1994: 8).

Advocates of the Art Nouveau as a stylistic technique sought to reject this ‘eclectic clutter’ in favour of a cleaner approach to art and design. From an interior design perspective this meant a unity of form and colour in any one room, with each piece of furniture or decoration complementing the next (Duncan, 1994: 8) creating a unit of spirit and expressive purpose. This attempt to simplify the interior environment of the



late 19<sup>th</sup> century represented, as did Symbolism in painting and the Arts and Crafts movement in the world of design, an oppositional response to the effects of the Industrial Revolution which was perceived to have robbed the design process of any sense of artistry, quality and expressive purpose. Art Nouveau could be seen as an extension of William Morris' aesthetic because Art Nouveau, like the Arts and Crafts movement, placed its emphasis on the influence of nature over the machine and valued hand-crafted, original works over mass-produced, with which the *bourgeoisie* decorated their homes (Duncan, 1994: 7-8). William Morris was opposed to the production of artistic or decorative works through the use of machinery because it was not an organic process; it removed any individuality from the piece and was not, intrinsically, a 'craft' as the end results were not hand-made (Duncan, 1994: 9-10). The designs of Art Nouveau therefore, whilst sometimes making use of the latest technological advances, especially in ceramics and glassware, did not embrace the idea of mass production, or standardisation; they were too dynamic and intricate in form, and too abstract and asymmetric in pattern, to be successfully produced other than by hand (Lancaster, 1952: 298).

A close and often symbiotic relationship existed between Symbolist artists and Art Nouveau designers as they sought to oppose the banal, mundane and mediocre world of modernity and to confer upon art and design a new expressive and suggestive role. In Belgium, for example, one of the first places in which Art Nouveau surfaced, we see a close relationship between Art Nouveau designers and group known as *Les Vingt* (*Les XX*) (Ormiston & Robinson, 2009: 6). *Les Vingt* was founded in Brussels by a group of Belgian artists who organised annual exhibitions between the years of 1884 and 1895 inviting artists from all countries to exhibit with them. The group was fundamentally opposed to the principles of the Academic Salon and exhibited works that either opposed the academic idea both at the level of form and subject matter. Impressionist, Neo-Impressionist and Symbolist artists were invited to join *Les XX* and their exhibitions featured fine and decorative arts exhibited side-by-side, including Art Nouveau designs, unlike the exhibitions of the Salon which would only normally feature paintings or sculptures and not the decorative arts (Block, 1987: 40).

Art Nouveau sought to raise the status of the decorative arts, perceived since the time of the Enlightenment as a 'craft', to that of 'fine art'. This is evident in the Art Nouveau

poster by Frank Brangwyn, designed for the exhibition *L'art Nouveau* in London in 1899 and hosted by Siegfried Bing (Pl. 99). The lady featured in the poster is holding a ceramic vase the significance of which, according to Hopkins, is that prior to the revolution of Art Nouveau a similar poster designed for a Salon exhibition would have featured a piece of what was then considered 'fine art', a painting or a sculpture. Brangwyn, however, chose a ceramic vase, a decorative artwork rather than an example of fine art, as the featured piece in the poster, suggestive of the exhibition's inclusiveness and promotion of the equality of decorative art with fine art (Hopkins, 2014).

Siegfried (Samuel) Bing (1838-1905), whose name is closely attached to the history and economic success of Art Nouveau, was a German-born art dealer who relocated from Hamburg to Paris in 1854 to manage the family ceramic business. In 1895, however, he began to promote Art Nouveau and opened a gallery from which he could display and sell it. Bing wanted the works presented in his gallery to be works of a 'new' art influenced by many sources and to encompass artistic and decorative styles of every persuasion. Bing named his gallery La Maison de l'Art Nouveau to which many credit with being the origin of the stylistic term Art Nouveau (Ormiston & Robinson, 2009: 6-7). La Maison de l'Art Nouveau became one of the most popular establishments from where one could view, purchase and exhibit works of Art Nouveau and Bing became one of the most prominent promoters of the Art Nouveau style. Lancaster quotes Samuel Bing as stating two standards against which the art to be displayed in his gallery were to be judged: "Each article [is] to be adapted to its proper purpose," and "Harmonies [are] to be sought for in lines and color [*sic*]" both of which, one could argue, became incorporated within the established form for Art Nouveau works in general (Lancaster, 1952: 304). Art Nouveau works known to have been exhibited at La Maison de l'Art Nouveau began with the opening stained glass window exhibition, commissioned and created by the glass designer Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848- 1933) working with designs from Nabis artists, and continued with a steady flow of designs by artists including Aubrey Beardsley, René Lalique (1860-1945) and Henry van de Velde (1863-1957) (Duncan, 1994: 25).

Prior to the opening of La Maison de l'Art Nouveau and his involvement with and promotion of Art Nouveau designs, however, Samuel Bing had already established himself and gained an important reputation as an importer and dealer in Japanese art as

well as a collector, exhibitor and promoter of all things Japanese. Early in his career Bing had travelled to Japan (c.1875) and was consequently fascinated by *japonisme*. Along with building up a respectable collection of Japanese ceramic works and Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints Bing co-ordinated exhibitions of similar objects of Japanese art and published his own art journal *Le Japon artistique* each month (1888-1891) (Pl. 19) (Weisberg, 2014). *Le Japon artistique* comprised articles dedicated to the culture of Japan with every monthly instalment included a feature on a particular piece of Japanese art. The journal was published not only in France but also in England and Germany (Jackson, 2000: 101 & 105). Ormiston and Robinson suggest that what Bing found most appealing in Japanese art was a sense of simplicity and expressiveness. One could therefore surmise that the block colours, lack of perspective and expressive simplicity of design characteristic of Japanese woodblock prints would have appealed to Bing on his travels through Japan (Ormiston & Robinson, 2009: 6-7). This would also explain why Bing was as strong an advocate of Art Nouveau as of *japonisme*. Indeed *japonisme* is one of the many influences attributed to the development of Art Nouveau and it is likely that Bing's own Japanese art collection, exhibitions and monthly journal influenced many of the artists invited to exhibit in his later gallery La Maison de l'Art Nouveau.

There were many exhibitions dedicated to Japanese art in Paris at this time (see Chapter 2). Samuel Bing curated several but Anna Jackson draws attention to a particular exhibition of Bing's that she feels was especially noteworthy in respect of Art Nouveau: *Maîtres de l'estampe Japonaise* (although the title of the exhibition was actually *Exposition de la gravure japonaise*) hosted in 1890 at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The exhibition comprised eighteenth and nineteenth century Japanese artists which included Katsushika Hokusai (1750-1849), Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806), and Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797-1861) as well as many others. The catalogue records a number of *yōkai* prints such as a work by Utamaro of a devil disguised as a mendicant monk (No. 396) in Bing's collection, Hokusai's *Five Apparitions* (shown together as No. 562 [see Pls. 1, 2, 3a, 10 & 80]), a Hiroshige of *Yoshituma and Tengu Monsters* (No. 667) and a Kuniyoshi of a woman transfigured into a cat (No. 678) all of which were drawn into the collection of Henri Vever. The exhibition was extensive consisting of over one thousand books and prints combined (Jackson, 2000: 105).

Whilst the sources of Art Nouveau were clearly diverse, most historians are agreed that Japanese art, as mediated to the artistic communities through exhibitions such as this, exerted an enormous impact upon Art Nouveau not only in terms of its stylistic development but also in terms of its vocabulary of motifs and images. Art Nouveau designers were particular besotted with imagery drawn from nature and it is possible to see even here the impact of Japanese culture upon Western avant-garde, with its respect for and love of nature, which in both Shintō and Buddhism spoke so keenly of spirituality. Many woodblock prints reflected the Japanese love for nature such as the genre of *kachoga* prints of flowers and birds and the *meisho-e* prints of landscapes. The line of a flower petal or the curve of a tree branch could inspire the designs on in a variety of mediums, take for example, the elegant belt buckle design by Henri Vever (Pl. 100). Vever's work is particularly interesting in this respect because, as noted above, he possessed one of the largest collections of Japanese prints in Paris and was well versed in Japanese art and culture. As a result, we can clearly see the general impact of Japanese prints upon his work but also, more specifically, we can trace the influence of the *yōkai* tradition upon his designs. One of the most opulent pieces jewellery to be produced by the Maison Vever was a woman's hair-comb called *Assyrienne*, designed to be placed in the hair and worn as a fashion accessory (Pl. 101a). Whilst it was called *Assyrienne*, the comb exhibits clear marine references. The fingers of the comb recall the tentacles of *medusae*, of squids and octopus. The head of a mysterious woman imperceptibly bleeds into them giving her the appearance of a mermaid-like creature. The piece recalls not only the strange floating sea-creatures, half fish, half human, pictured by Odilon Redon (Pls. 44 & 48) but also the Japanese tradition of the *ningyo* (Pls. 45-47). Another work, very similar in spirit, and recalling the example of the *yōkai* tradition, is another brooch designed by the Maison Vever called *Apparitions* (Pl. 101b). This piece has much in common with *Assyrienne*, possessing as it does a marine theme in which strange faces emerge from beneath the waves.

Art Nouveau found expression not only in jewellery design but in many other mediums including ceramics, furniture, jewellery, posters and metalwork. One particular medium, however, in which Art Nouveau flourished and was particularly revolutionary was that of glassware. Prior to the development of Art Nouveau glassware manufacturers and designers engaged with the principles of utility and functionality. The purpose of glass designer and manufacturer was to perfect the vessel in order to better display what the

item was intended to hold, thus glassmakers strove to produce glassware that was as smooth and clear as possible. Hopkins argues that Art Nouveau glass designers and glassmakers reversed this approach and no longer employed the glass in a functional way but rather exploited the expressive and suggestive qualities of the medium, hence reversing conventional thinking and opposing the spirit of the age (Hopkins, 2014). Glass effects were explored at great length and designers made use of the latest technology; new techniques yielded what became known as cameo glass and iridescent glass. Cameo glass was created by using at least two layers of glass in the making of the piece and the chosen design was then etched in relief using an engraving wheel or, in some cases, hydrofluoric acid (Haslam, 1988: 22-23). Iridescent glass was achieved through the use of metallic oxides which were applied to coloured glass producing a coloured clouded effect, not unlike oil on water<sup>1</sup> (Haslam, 1988: 28). The importance of these two techniques of glassmaking is that both Cameo and Iridescence are reminiscent of ancient crafts: cameo glasswork was a technique used during the Roman Empire (c.27 BC-c.476 AD) and iridescence occurs in glass that has been buried in soil over a period of centuries resulting from the chemical reaction of carbonic acid acting upon the surface. Iridescence therefore mimicked the effect of time and gave Art Nouveau glassware that employed the technique a feel of antiquity. However, as Haslam comments:

“Emulating ancient techniques was often the motive behind historicism in the arts, as much as any philosophical, political or religious nostalgia for times gone by. Ancient Roman cameo-cut glass was imitated because it was a technological challenge rather than in memory of a golden age. Similarly the iridescence on glass dug up by archaeologists aroused the scientific curiosity of many nineteenth-century glassmakers, who reproduced the effect in their workshops. They wanted to show that in addition to anything their ancestors had achieved they could also do what previously only Nature had been able to do” (Haslam, 1988: 22).

Here Haslam suggests that the emulation and development of ancient techniques in Art Nouveau glass design was more scientific than sentimental; proposing that Art Nouveau designers sought to replicate the cameo style of glass because of the technical challenges that it presented. However, considering the socio-political context in which Art Nouveau emerged and the contiguity between Art Nouveau and Symbolism, we may be more inclined to argue that Art Nouveau glassware designers revived and developed such ancient techniques to bring into play the ideas of ‘other times and other places’ in other words to create a sense of the ‘exotic’ and even ‘archaic’ which, whilst grounded in and

made possible by modern technological developments, might oppose the banal and mediocre nature of factory-line production methods.

This sense of the 'exotic' which was yielded by cameo glass and iridescence was then complemented by the unusual formal resolutions of Art Nouveau glass. The gradated tones, sinuous shapes, unusual proportions and undulating surfaces of many vases opposed the neatly groomed and functional lines and forms of contemporary manufacture. They conferred upon the vase a new expressive purpose that contested the utilitarian assumptions of much contemporary glassware. These particular techniques and forms were then graced by a highly unusual but distinctive iconography drawn from both from nature and from the fertile imaginations of Art Nouveau designers. It is no surprise then that in this context Japanese art provided Art Nouveau with an extensive vocabulary of images upon which to draw. Duncan identifies images of carp and wisteria as two common themes used in Japanese art that were subsequently adopted by Western artists (Duncan, 1994: 15). An excellent example is to be found in Émile Gallé's *La Carpe*, 1878 (Pl. 103) and the 'Wisteria table lamp' produced by the Tiffany Studios, c.1908 (Norfolk, Virginia, Chrysler Museum of Art). Works such as these then engaged the imagination of the audience, appealed to the senses and opened doorways to other worlds 'speaking in words of abstruse sense' (Baudelaire) to those with whom they came into contact.

Glass as a medium provided Art Nouveau designers with a material that was simultaneously traditional and innovative. Traditional because glass has been produced and used since the early centuries and innovative because of the range of novel techniques that could now be employed to create new effects and which meant that the medium of glass could be treated in a more expressive and suggestive way than ever before. Émile Gallé (1846-1904) was a particularly prolific designer of Art Nouveau glassware. Gallé was born and raised in the French town of Nancy, the centre of the 19<sup>th</sup> century French glass industry. He was the son of a glassmaker and designer, Charles Gallé, who owned a shop that made and sold glassware and ceramics (Garner, 1976: 11-13). Gallé as a child showed an interest in natural sciences, botany in particular as he grew older, and this interest was manifested in the floral inspired designs he created at the age of sixteen for his father's business. Gallé may also have been inspired by his admiration of the fantastical works of the illustrations of J. J. Grandville (1803-1847) who designed satirical

illustrations and caricatures in which he would often animate inanimate objects or anthropomorphise plants and animals (Garner, 1976: 15). In 1843 and 1844 Grandville published a series of works entitled *Un Autre Monde* (*Another World*) described by Michel Melot as an “original and disturbing book [where] Grandville abandoned the logic of the conscious mind to depict the world of dreams, in which perspective, viewpoint, shape and size undergo peculiar metamorphosis and distortion” (Pl. 102) (Melot, 2015). Sources such as these, Garner argues, inspired Gallé’s imagination not only at the time but in later life as a master glass designer. Given the context of *japonisme* that existed at the time, and Gallé’s proximity to Symbolism in the visual arts and to other Art Nouveau designers, we may also propose that his work was inspired by Japanese sources. Many of his designs evidence his love of nature and of its exotic and strange forms and very frequently images of those flowers that preoccupy Japanese culture, such as chrysanthemums, cherry blossom, peonies, bamboo and wisteria, were employed in his designs. We can see, too, in his *La Carpe* vase, a demonstration of his love of Kuniyoshi’s fish prints. In addition to the range of ‘Japanese’ iconography that Gallé employed, we might also note some significant formal borrowings from Japanese sources. The gradated tones of Gallé vases in which burnt oranges give way to pale lemons or indigo blues seem to evaporate into the air recall the delicate gradations of tone to be found in the Japanese prints. In addition, the organic and flowing forms of the vases with their expressive proportions recall the same expressive forms to be found in Japanese ceramics, examples of which were to be found not only in French private collections of the time but also in the Musée Guimet in Paris. A case exists then for exploring the possible impact of the *yōkai* tradition upon Gallé’s work.

Gallé’s vase *La Carpe* of 1878 (Pl. 103) represents an excellent starting point for our enquiry referencing, as it does, a specific genre of Japanese print: *Saito Oniwakamaru, “Young Devil Child” (Benkei) fighting the giant carp in the waterfall of Bishamon ga taki* by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi and published by Masada in 1872 (Pl. 104)<sup>2</sup> ([www.japaneseprints-london.com](http://www.japaneseprints-london.com)). Both use a similar colour palette of muted blue and Gallé highlights his vase with a similar rustic orange/red colour to the carp in Yoshitoshi’s print. Gallé’s *Vase La Carpe* was purchased by Le Musée des Arts Décoratifs at the 1878 l’Exposition Universelle and now reference the vase in relation to a specific ink drawing from volume XIII of Hokusai’s XV volume *Manga* which represents the Japanese goddess Kwannon riding a giant carp (Pl. 105) ([www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr](http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr)). This giant carp is also said to have been

the inspiration for the *Carp Vase*, a layered glass vase by Eugène Rousseau, also exhibited at the 1878 l'Exposition Universelle (Pl. 106) ([www.art.thewalters.org](http://www.art.thewalters.org)).

Another vase by Gallé which offers evidence regarding the impact of the Japanese ghost genre upon Art Nouveau designers is the vase *Les Hommes Noirs* (*The Dark Men*) of 1900 (Pl. 107a). Gallé created this remarkable vase in association with his colleague Victor Prouvé (1858–1943) and following its completion the vase was displayed in Gallé's exhibition at the Paris International World Exposition in 1900. *Les Hommes Noirs* is said to have been made as a political commentary upon the injustice surrounding the Dreyfus Affair that was occurring in France at the time, where public opinion was split between those that believed in Dreyfus' innocence and those that were convinced of his guilt<sup>3</sup>. Tina Oldknow, curator of Modern Glass at the Corning Museum of Glass, makes the case that Gallé was a pro-Dreyfusard and that *Les Hommes Noirs* was reflection upon these events. Oldknow quotes Gallé as declaring that the vase *Les Hommes Noirs* was a reflection of the "fanaticism, hatred, lies, prejudice, cowardice, selfishness, and hypocrisy" of French society and which had characterised the case. Oldknow suggests that Gallé and Prouvé chose to represent the innocence of Dreyfus through the symbolic use of lilies on the vase; Oldknow also suggests that the contrast on the vase between light and dark represented to Gallé the struggle between good and evil (Oldknow, 2011).

Surrounding the vase are the acid-etched *hommes noirs* (dark men) and the question: "Hommes noirs d'où sortez-vous?" (Dark men, from where do you come?), which is followed by the response "Nous sortons de dessous terre" (We come from beneath the earth) (Pls. 107b & c). It would seem that these *hommes noirs* are supposed to originate from 'beneath the earth', or Hell, and are representative of the anti-Semitic vilification of Dreyfus that perpetuated the falsehood of his supposed guilt (Oldknow, 2011). If these *hommes noirs* are indeed creatures from Hell, it is not implausible that they were inspired by the Japanese *Gaki* or hungry ghosts. *Gaki* or *Gakidō* are *yōkai* that originate from the world of Buddhist theology. Within Buddhist belief there are six realms of existence through which one is reincarnated: *Tendō* (the realm of the Gods), *Ashuradō* (the realm of the Demigods), *Gakidō* (the realm of the Hungry Ghosts), *Jigokudō* (the realm of Hell), *Chikushōdō* (the realm of Animals) and *Nindō* (the realm of Humans) ([www.onmarkproductions.com](http://www.onmarkproductions.com)). The realm of *Gakidō* is filled with spirits condemned to be eternally hungry. These spirits are depicted as ravenous-looking creatures with thin



limbs, swollen bellies and claws for hands and are often depicted in a hunched position (Pls. 108a-c). It is these particular *yōkai* that one can compare directly with the *hommes noirs* designed by Gallé and Prouvé on their vase. The creations of Gallé and Prouvé appear to wear a similar pained expression with claw-like fingers, have emaciated shoulders and arms and adopt the same hunched postures as the *Gaki* that we find in the Buddhist handscrolls (Pl. 109b). Henry Alabaster, In one of the earliest of European studies on the subject of Buddhism published in 1871, describes these creatures under the terms “Preta or Pret” from the original Sanskrit description *Preta-gati*:

“*Preta or Pret* - One of the most miserable forms of being. Some are condemned to a weary life in regions beyond the walls of the world, where no light ever penetrates. Others rove about on earth, incessantly in motion. Though twelve miles in height, they are so thin as to be invisible. They particularly suffer from hunger and thirst, being extremely voracious, and yet, from the very small size of their mouths, unable to ever satisfy their cravings” (Alabaster, 1871: 189).

*Gaki* such as these can be found in the illustrated handscroll *Gaki-zoshi* (Scroll of the Hungry Ghosts) from the Heian period (794–1185), which is now displayed in the Kyoto National Museum ([www.kyohaku.go.jp](http://www.kyohaku.go.jp)). Comparisons with the figures which haunt the surfaces of the *Les Hommes Noirs* reveals a marked similarity to the representations of *Gaki* in these scrolls (Pls. 109a & b).

Vases produced by other Art Nouveau designers may also be seen to reference *yōkai* traditions. A ceramic work entitled *Vase with Face* dating from 1892-1893 designed by Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat, for example, appears to reference *nuke-kubi* in the strangely dislocated head that hovers, torso-less, at the foot of the vase (Pl. 110a). Similar motifs may be observed in other mediums. Two works entitled *The Opera of the Sea*, which return us to the marine theme, one an inlaid gesso panel of c.1902 and one an oil and tempera on paper of c.1910 by the Scottish artist Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh (1864-1933) may also be seen to employ this iconography and demonstrate the potential for having been influenced by Japanese art (Pl. 110b & c). Charles Rennie Mackintosh, with whom Margaret worked on the *The Opera of the Sea* pieces, is also known to have been influenced by the styles of Japanese art (Ormiston & Robinson, 2009: 132). Interestingly, though perhaps anecdotally for the purposes of our discussion, Robertson notes that Margaret MacDonald and her brother Frances, along with Charles Rennie Macintosh and Herbert Macnair engaged with an “enigmatic symbolism [...] and the treatment of abstract themes [...]” which earned the group the sobriquet the ‘Spook School’ (Robertson, 2015).

The piece *Vase with face*, 1892–93 designed by Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat is a large, stoneware vase with the face of a woman carved into the bowl of the vase. The Metropolitan Museum of Art describe this face as that of a ‘sleeping’ woman and attribute it to the emphasis Symbolist art held with the importance of dreams ([www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)). However, Haslam, in a perceptive essay on the impact of Japanese tea-ceremony ceramics on the Studio-Pottery movement in Britain at the turn of the century, notes that Dalpayrat was one of many artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century s that were inspired by the pottery of the Japanese tea-ceremony (Haslam, 2004: 159). Haslam writes that such *cha-no-yu* (tea-ceremony) pottery was exhibited by the Japanese in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and later bought by the South Kensington Museum (now known as the Victoria & Albert Museum) and exhibited in London after the Exhibition (Haslam, 2004: 151). Subsequently, Wakai Kenzaburo (1834-1908) curated display of *cha-no-yu* pottery In the Universal Exhibition in Paris of 1878 and literature on these Japanese wares was widely accessible in the form of a catalogue compiled In 1880 by Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826-97), who worked for the British Museum, in Christopher Dresser’s book *Japan: Its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufactures*, published in 1882, and in Samuel Bing’s popular periodical *Le Japon Artistique* in 1888 (Haslam, 2009: 151-152; 155). In addition, examples of such ceramics were then available in museums such as the Musée Guimet in Paris. This lends credence to the view that Dalpayrat discovered in the forms of Japanese tea-ceremony ceramics a module for his own designs and might also suggest in terms of imagery he was inspired *yūrei* and *yōkai* imagery, either of which could have inspired the motif of ‘floating head’ in his *Vase with face*.

The designs of Art Nouveau owe a considerable debt to the influence of Japanese art, and Japanese prints in particular. Along with the Arts and Crafts movement, practitioners of Art Nouveau rejected the use of mass production and machine-methods of manufacture celebrating instead hand-made craft within art and were instrumental in raising the perceived status of the decorative arts to that of the ‘fine’ arts of painting and sculpture. In tandem with Symbolism, artists of the Art Nouveau persuasion opposed modernity and sought solace in their own imagination and the *au delà*. Japanese prints were attractive to this generation of avant-garde designers because they provided an inspiring and ‘expressive’ model for their own work and represented a novel and ‘exotic’ form of a culture not yet marred by the Industrial Revolution and its modern machine; the

clean lines, block colours and two dimensionality were the antithesis of Academic standards of 'fine' art; and the subject matter was both strange and unknown. The prints, often representing a moment in a story, a scene from a play, or part of a larger, unseen, picture, stimulated the imagination to complete the image and the narrative in the mind's eye. Whilst a connection between the designs of Art Nouveau and Japanese prints has been long-since been established and proven by way of sources such as Bing's periodical *Le Japon artistique*, there is also material enough to warrant further investigation into the influence of the *yōkai* print and imagery upon those advocates and employers of the Art Nouveau style, especially when one considers the specific comparisons offered above. In the example of Maison Vever jewellery, Gallé's vases and Dalpayrat's ceramics, we have perhaps the start of an evidential base to suggest the more specific impact of the *yōkai* imagination.

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1. Iridescent glass techniques were sometimes patented and named by many glassmakers; for example the Austrian glassworks Loetz invented 'Papillon' iridescence which used iridescent spots of colour spread over the glass piece and 'Phenomenon' iridescence which involved using glass threads layered on top of iridescent glass which were then manipulated with glass-tools to form undulating patterns in the glass threads. Louis Comfort Tiffany also used iridescence in his glassware and one form of iridescence was known as 'Lava' which, as the name suggested, made use of highlights of gold iridescent glass that ran throughout a piece of glassware that had deliberate depressions in its surface (Haslam, 1988: 28-31).
  2. Mushashibo Benkei was a mischievous young boy, earning himself the nickname Oniwaka (Little Devil). This print by Yoshitoshi refers to the story of when Benkei, or Oniwaka, as a young child under the tutelage of the monks at the temple of Hongu Daijin he learned that his mother had died after being eaten by the giant carp that lived in the waters under the Bishamon Waterfall. Benkei sought out the giant carp at the Bishamon Waterfall, fought with it, and killed it, releasing his mother's remains from the carp's stomach (Stevenson, 1983: 32).
  3. Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935) was a military captain of French-Jewish descent who in 1894 was wrongfully accused of, and imprisoned for, passing French military secrets to a German military counterpart. The injustice that shrouded this case involved the attempts of the French military and subsequently of right-wing politicians to conceal the truth by removing from office those that found evidence to support the innocence of Dreyfus and acquitting the true guilty party. Dreyfuss was subsequently disgraced and imprisoned on the notorious Devil's Island. The 'Dreyfuss Affair', as it became known, divided French opinion. Those on the left-wing became known as pro-Drefusards whilst those on the right-wing were known as anti-Dreyfusards. The debate about his supposed guilt or innocence involved high profile figures in the world of politics, the arts (notably Zola who argued for Dreyfus' innocence) and everyday life, and was only settled when in 1906 Dreyfus was shown to be innocent and was pardoned (Bredin, 1986).

## **Chapter VII**

### **The *Yōkai* Imagination Beyond France and Britain:**

#### **Toorop, Delville and Ensor**

Having explored the evidence for the impact of Japanese ghost imagery upon avant-garde artists and designers in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain and France, at least as far as this preliminary study has been able to excavate it, the question arises as to whether or not artists in other Symbolist centres across Europe participated in this interest. What about Dutch and Belgian Symbolists, even those in Germanic and Scandinavian contexts? To begin to answer this question let us turn our attention in the first instance to the Low Countries and to Toorop, Delville and Ensor.

Jan Toorop (1858-1928) is one of the most important and yet still most poorly studied of Dutch Symbolist artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Toorop was born in the Indonesian province of Central Java but at the age of five he moved with his family to the Indonesian island of Banka (or Bangka) staying in the north-west port town of Muntok. At the age of ten, in 1868, Toorop was to spend fifteen months in Batavia at the request of his father as a preparatory measure for his forthcoming schooling in Holland (Siebelhoff, 1981-82: 72-73). Batavia, as noted above, had formerly been the administrative centre for the VOC trading company and its archives were still, at that point, partially housed there (Niemeijer, 2007: 61). The influence of its trading history was still present, for the port town owed its wealth and power to its trading history with the Far East. Toorop's early life was marked, as was Gauguin's, by this 'exotic' colonial experience and he grew up, as did Gauguin, with a conflicted character – he was part European and yet part 'oriental', part 'colonial' ... part 'other'. Toorop's stay in Batavia only lasted for one year, from 1868-1869, and this coincided with the end of the Edo period and the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate in Japan, which led to the re-opening of trade channels between Japan and the rest of the world. With Batavia being a port town, it is not an unreasonable assumption that trade ships from Japan may have docked there, having done so previously, bringing with them the Japanese prints used as packing material for exports to Western Europe. Siebelhoff, in his article "The Family Background and Personality of Jan Toorop", quotes Toorop regarding his childhood experiences as saying:

“The East Indies have meant very much to me. The Indies cannot be left out (*weggedacht*) of the beautiful, half-Chinese environment on Banka and the Oriental nature there in the Indies brought me in contact with beauty for the first time. The dresses which work on your imagination, the beautiful materials, the mask-plays in the Chinese Kampongs ... it made an enormous impression on me, even as a child” (Siebelhoff, 1981-82: 73).

If Jan Toorop could find the beauty of Chinese art and culture so enthralling as a child then it is likely that in later life he might be drawn to the Japanese prints that he would have seen in Holland. There are several art works by Toorop that seem to demonstrate the influence of the *yōkai* tradition and specifically of two Japanese *yōkai* in particular: *rokuro-kubi* and *yūrei*. In his Symbolist works of the 1890s Toorop repeatedly uses the figure of a tall, slender woman, often depicted as floating within the picture or standing tall with her arms bent at the elbow; her head bowed and her long hair undulating around her face and throughout the work. Such floating figures are reminiscent of the long, twisting and sinuous necks of the *rokuro-kubi* and can be seen in Toorop’s works on paper such as *O Grave, where is thy Victory?* of 1892 (Pl. 111); *The Three Fiancées*, 1893 (Pl. 112); *Fatality*, 1893 (Pl. 113); and *Shipwreck*, 1895 (Pl. 114). The latter ink drawing, *Shipwreck*, is especially similar to the *rokuro-kubi* as Toorop has chosen to portray only the head, shoulders and hair of the female figures, and the pattern of the hair belonging to the lowest two and the furthest left figures obscures the shoulders and arms of these figures, effectively reducing the figures to floating heads on an elongated neck, akin to the *rokuro-kubi* (see Appendix II, Chapter I). In both *The Three Fiancées* and *Fatality* there are standing female figures all of which wear floor-length robes that obscure the feet and are depicted with their heads bowed and arms bent at the elbow and wrist are redolent of the female *yōkai* known as *yūrei*, who are also, similar to the three brides as illustrated in *The Three Fiancées*, often shrouded in white (see Appendix II, Chapter I).

The work of the Belgian Symbolists, too, offers some interesting evidence of the impact of the Japanese ghost tradition upon their work. Jean Delville’s large-scale painting *Satan’s Treasures* of 1895 (Pl. 115), for example, may be viewed as an innovative reworking of a well-known *yōkai* theme, that of the ‘The Dream of the Fisherman’s Wife’. This particular theme in Japanese ghost literature was, most memorably, treated by Hokusai in his 1814 woodblock print on the subject (Pl. 116). Technically, the work

belongs to the *shunga* genre but the way in which it stages the erotic, representing the monstrous form of two octopuses practising cunnilingus on a shell or pearl-diver deep under the sea, would have placed the work, at least to the 19<sup>th</sup> century European imagination, very much in the *yōkai* tradition. Other Japanese artists treated this theme; Yanagawa Shigenobu designed a woodblock print on the subject in 1830 and the subject gave rise to a distinct genre of netsuke that represents naked women being fondled by an octopus. Talerico, in her essay on Hokusai's print, makes clear that the work was already well-known in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century being discussed by Edmond de Goncourt amongst others (Talerico, 2001) and Bru maintains that Hokusai's print influenced Rops, Rodin, Khnopff and Picasso (Bru, 2010). Whilst Bru does not discuss Delville, it is not hard to see how Delville's innovative conceptualisation of Satan as an octopus-like figure which caresses its 'treasures', a group of nubile, slumbering or even ecstatic hermaphrodite figures stretched out along the bed of the ocean, might have owed a debt to Hokusai's print.

The work of the Belgian artist James Ensor (1860-1949) also offers some strong evidence for the impact of the Japanese *yōkai* tradition upon late 19<sup>th</sup> century Symbolism. Born in Ostend to a Belgian mother and an English father, Ensor remained there for his entire life with the exception of his three years of study in Brussels at the Academy of Art from 1877-1880. It is well documented by many scholars that Ensor's mother and her sister, Aunt Mimi, were the owner-managers of a souvenir shop in Ostend which provided the source material that fuelled his passion for the unusual in his artwork. As a result the artist was not only influenced by his surroundings but was literally surrounded by his influences. Benson, one of the earliest chroniclers of Ensor's life and work provides a potent description of Ensor's home environment that permits us to understand the catalyst for Ensor's ghostly imagination:

"His own room on the fourth floor, in which he still lives, is like a surrealist's nightmare: Japanese masks, tall carved chests, bowls of fish, shells worked into inkstands; skulls wearing wide-brimmed hats, with cigars between their toothless jaws, worn rugs with crazy floral patterns, an old harmonium on which he often extemporizes, a vermilion ball of crystal hanging from the ceiling and reflecting distorted forms; Chinese vases over the painted marble fire-place, women's shoes filled with faded flowers, and every-where his own paintings pouring their dissonant choral beauty into this oriental bazaar." (Benson, 1934: 2).

We now know that the stock for the gift shop, at least a good part of it, was acquired on a regular basis by Aunt Mimi, who bought it directly from Samuel Bing in Paris (Todts, 2009; Zimmer et al., 2014). We may therefore infer that a large percentage of the works that Ensor's family sold in their shop were of Japanese origin. Indeed Zimmer et al. make the case that Ensor became particularly interested in Japanese theatre masks, ghosts and skeleton diagrams (Zimmer et al., 2014:23-24). Items from Ensor's own collection were often used as the subject matter for his still-life paintings and these give us a good idea of the range of objects that he loved and that inspired him. *Still-life: Chinoiserie* of 1907 (Pl. 117) for example, represents two Japanese woodblock prints, two Japanese fans, what appear to be Japanese and Chinese ceramics, small statuettes, but, standing upright and in pride of place, a frightening *oni* mask, with a second such mask lying flat on the table. Although the two prints in the painting are *bijin-ga*, Ensor was less attracted this genre than artists such as Whistler and Monet. Instead the painting provides evidence of Ensor's clear love of what Todtz (2009) classifies as the 'grotesque'. Despite what might appear to be the rather obvious influence of Japanese art and of Japanese ghost imagery in his work, Zimmer et al. in their recent book on Ensor note that up to now no one has seriously investigated the relationship between the artist and the Japanese sources that attracted him (Zimmer, 2014). A case clearly exists then for exploring this issue further. To what extent might the Japanese ghost tradition feature in Ensor's work?

A useful starting point for our discussion is an interesting portrait drawing of Aunt Mimi, which Ensor made in the 1890s (Pl. 118). The drawing is entitled *My Aunt Asleep and Dreaming of Monsters* but this is no Fuseli's *Nightmare* (Pl. 39). What is interesting about the portrait is that Aunt Mimi is represented as sleeping peacefully whilst the monsters and ghosts gather around her. We may infer from this representation that Aunt Mimi is very much at home with the monsters that people her dreams - her sleep is sound. It is possible to argue, then, that Aunt Mimi rather enjoys the company of ghosts and monsters and the drawing may indicate that she, too, like her nephew, enjoyed an interest in the grotesque which may, to some extent, have informed the nature of her purchases from Bing.

Whereas Ensor's collection of Japanese *objets d'art* was extensive and included the usual range of items that contributed to the *japonaiserie* of many avant-garde paintings of the

time, he clearly entertained a particular predilection for the monstrous and grotesque, as evidenced by the frightening *oni* mask which really forms the centre-piece of his *Still-life* (Pl. 117). It seems highly likely then that Ensor was well aware of the Japanese *yōkai* tradition and would naturally have been attracted to it both for its own sake but also for what it could offer him at the artistic level.

Ensor, not unusually, kept in touch with the work of his contemporaries and wider developments within the art world by subscribing to art journals of the time and his interest in the supernatural may have been fuelled by various articles written for certain Belgian journals. Lesko in fact has identified some of the contemporary journals that Ensor may have been especially interested in. In particular, she draws attention to two articles: “Fantastic Reality” (Anonymous, 1887) from *L’Art Moderne* and “Ce qui disent les meubles” (“What the Furniture Says”) (Léo Lespès, 1863) which is actually a fictional story from *Uylenspiegel*, a weekly journal founded by Félicien Rops in 1856 and published until 1864 (Lesko, 1985: 99-100). Both articles address the notion of a supernatural dimension existing just below the surface of reality, with particular reference to inanimate objects and may have influenced (in the case of the latter story) or helped to perpetuate (in the case of the former article) Ensor’s series of works that reference haunted furniture: *The Haunted Furniture*, 1888 and *The Haunted Fireplace*, 1888 (Pls. 119a & b). In her essay Lesko compares the story of *Ce qui disent les meubles* to a Swedish folk tale about animals gaining the power of speech on Christmas Eve, the difference being that it is the furniture, not the animals, that ‘come to life’ on Christmas Eve in the story by Lespès (Lekso, 1985: 99). However one might be more inclined to cite the impact of Japanese ghost folklore upon Ensor and specifically the belief that any inanimate object has the potential to contain within it a spirit or demon, for example *kasa-obake* the umbrella *yōkai* and the Japanese ritual of *susuharai* (mentioned in Chapter I) which is meant to prevent such spirits settling inside the furniture and other household articles (Pl. 64).

Two recurring subjects in Ensor’s art are images of Death, represented in the form of a skeleton, and *oni* masks, both of which, one could argue, relate directly to Japanese *yōkai* traditions. An excellent example of the former is to be found in Ensor’s two paintings on the theme of *Skeleton Looking at Chinoiserie* of 1885 and 1888 (Pl. 120). In many respects Ensor’s infatuation with skeleton imagery was rooted in some very ancient



European traditions such as the *danse macabre* of the late Middle Ages as demonstrated through the series of woodcuts *Dance of Death* by Holbein the Younger as discussed above (Chapter III) (*The Rich Man*, British Museum). Subsequently this theme reappeared in the history of European art in a form of iconography that became known as 'Death and the Maiden' and it resurfaced particularly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the context of Symbolism, witness, for example Edvard Munch's painting and prints on the subject during 1893-1894. However, given Ensor's evident interests in Japanese art and particularly its more grotesque aspects in the form of the *yōkai* tradition, it seems appropriate to cite Japanese sources as possible influences upon his work and especially given that Ensor's skeletons depart from traditional iconographic patterns. Like the skeletons of Kyosai, Ensor's skeletons disport themselves in the most unusual of ways as if they really are part of our world. This one is pictured against the background of two *ichimai-e* (large print) images which appear to be a *bijin-ga* print (portrait of a beautiful woman or Courtesan) to the far right, and a *kacho-ga* (bird and flower picture), in the centre. The remaining smaller images: four to the left, underneath the red (Japanese) fan, and the two located towards the middle-right, could also be either *bijin-ga* prints or *yakusha-e* prints (actor prints). The skeleton itself, nonchalantly reclines in its chair and contemplates a Japanese illustrated handscroll not unlike that designed by the artist Suushi which we have already discussed (Pls. 4a-f) as if it were the morning newspaper.

*Skeleton Looking at Chinoiserie* details what appears to be an average bourgeois interior. It is believed that Ensor originally painted the figure reading the 'chinoiserie' as an elderly gentleman, possible in the early 1880s, as one of his *bourgeois* interiors but then re-worked the painting in approximately 1885 to replace the human head with the head of a skeleton and added a skull in the bottom, left-hand corner. According to the King Baudouin Foundation website "The presence of the skull serves neither to worry the onlooker, nor to mock the subject. The intimate atmosphere and magical beauty of the oriental colours are not disturbed: they seem at best to be subtly menaced, rendering the intimacy and beauty even more vulnerable." ([www.heritage-kbf.be](http://www.heritage-kbf.be)). We might, however, take issue with this view and suggest that, on the contrary, the purpose of the skeleton is exactly that, to worry the audience and also to mock the subject. It is possible that Ensor had chosen to adapt one of his previous *bourgeois* interior paintings, rather than create a new work altogether, in order to symbolically begin a new phase in his artistic career. By adapting one of his own works, styled to resemble the interiors of

the Impressionist artists, simultaneously demonstrated Ensor's contempt for Impressionism and the *Bourgeoisie*: replacing the head of the elderly man with the head of a skeleton could be suggestive of the death of the *Bourgeoisie* in Ensor's eyes, suggesting that *bourgeois* culture was no longer of any importance for Ensor, if it ever was.

Patrice Marandel suggests that Ensor's use of skulls, skeletons and masks as themes were possibly inspired by the Flemish *vanitas* still life paintings of the seventeenth century (Marandel, 1976:3-4). While this may well be the case there is also a strong similarity between Ensor's macabre images and many of the Japanese of *yōkai*. For example if we consider Ensor's *Chinoiserie* drawings then some direct and comparisons may be made with Japanese ghost imagery that shows, in places, straightforward transcriptions. *Chinoiserie an old woman*, of c.1896 for example (Pl. 121a) derives from the print *Kiyohime Hidaka-gawa ni jatai to naru zu* (*Kiyohime Changing into a Serpent at Hidaka River*), 1890<sup>1</sup> (Pl. 121b) by the Japanese print artist Yoshitoshi. Both works depict one, lone female figure in a similar stance: hunched over as though enduring an intense pain. Both female characters have their right feet placed slightly before their left, as though slowly moving across the image from right to left; both are wearing a very large, patterned kimono and have long hair, worn loose so that it falls forwards in front of their faces and trails down their back. There is also a similar dark shadow that appears at the top of both works which could be taken as a cloud in the print by Yoshitoshi and a plume of smoke in the drawing by Ensor.

Another drawing by Ensor that shows the influence of Japanese *yōkai* imagery is *Chinoiserie, a demon* of 1885 (Pl. 122). The character in this drawing appears to be an ancient seated creature wearing a very long and plain robe. The robed garment of Ensor's 'demon' is similar to that of a Buddhist monk and this, together with the withered features of the figure and Ensor's choice of backdrop, may suggest that this particular drawing was influenced by one of the forms of *tengu*. There are two kinds of *tengu* according to Japanese tradition, the lesser, bird-like *karasu-* or *ko-tengu* and the greater, more humanoid *konoha-* or *dai-tengu* (Meyer, 2012: 80-82). The *dai-tengu* are identified by their exaggerated noses, rather than the beaks of the *ko-tengu*; they are thought to reside in mountainous regions and resemble the *yamabushi* (mountain priests) and are extremely powerful (Stevenson, 1983: 76). Ensor's 'demon' appears to be wearing the robes of a mountain priest and the artist seems to have created a

background of what could be the rocks of a mountainside. Ensor has also given the impression that his creature is very old due to its wizened face; being ancient and wise are two further characteristics of *konoha-tengu*. However Ensor's 'demon' features neither the long nose of the *dai-tengu* nor the beak of the *ko-tengu*; nor does it possess the characteristic wings of either *tengu* or the traditional pill-box hat. On closer inspection the creature does have a third eye in the middle of its forehead. Perhaps therefore Ensor was also inspired by some of Hokusai's *manga* cartoons. As mentioned above there is a "three-eyed monster" featured in one of the Hokusai plates displayed in the book by Jocelyn Bouquillard and Christophe Marquet on Hokusai as a *manga* artist which bears a similarity to Ensor's *Chinoiserie with Demon* in the shape of its jaw, exposed teeth and upper lip as well as its third eye located on the forehead and its position of being seated cross-legged and leaning forward [Pl. 34b] (Bouquillard & Marquet, 2007: 128-129; plate 2).

Another example of potential *yōkai* influence may be found in *Mirror with Skeleton*, 1890 [PLATE 123a]. In this drawing one can see the reflection of a skeleton in an ornately framed mirror and surrounding the mirror are various types of mask. Ensor has positioned some of the masks so that some are gathered around the base of the mirror whilst others floating above the mirror, suspended in mid-air, recalling the example of Japanese *nuke-kubi*<sup>2</sup>. Similar 'floating heads' also appear in the background of Ensor's painting *Pierrot and Skeleton in a Yellow Robe*, 1893 (Pl. 124) and emerging from the furniture in Ensor's drawing *The Haunted Furniture*, 1888 (Pl. 119a) which also includes a *rokuro-kubi* styled head and elongated neck towards the top right of the drawing. This work may also be compared to the Japanese belief in *tsukumogami* which are inanimate objects found within the home that have become old enough (one hundred years old) to have grown a soul (*kami*) and become animate *yōkai* (Meyer, 2012: 206). Examples of such *yōkai* are *karakasa*- or *kasa-obake*, *bake-zōri* and *mokumoku-ren*. We have already discussed the case of *kasa-obake* (Pls. 64a & b), whilst *bake-zōri* are animated sandals, usually *zōri* (straw sandals), known for their three eyes (the three points at which the straps of the sandal are attached to its base) and two teeth (the two wooden platforms that are attached to the base of the sandal, underneath); whilst *mokumoku-ren*, the spirits of torn sliding doors (*shōji*), have been discussed above in relation to the work of Redon (see Chapter III), (see also Appendix II, Chapter I) (Meyer, 2012: 208).

The notion of haunted objects is a repeated one with Ensor capturing 'haunted furniture' as already noted above. Alongside the aforementioned *Haunted Furniture*, 1888 Lesko's article cites several further works of Ensor's that combine both ghostly apparitions and household objects including a less well-known painting from the *Haunted Furniture* series of 1885; a drawing from 1886 entitled *My Sad and Splendid Portrait; The Haunted Mantelpiece*, 1888 and *The Devil's Mirror*, a drawing of charcoal and pencil also created in 1888 (Lesko, 1985: 99-100). Each of these works convey a sense of the supernatural encroaching upon reality while 'reality', usually represented by the presence of a human, remains oblivious. As mentioned above Lesko suggests that Ensor's fixation in representing haunted furniture may have been inspired by the short story written by Leo Lespès however one might equally argue for the impact of many Japanese ghost stories upon Ensor, especially where reality and the supernatural exist simultaneously often with the *yōkai* of the tale concealing their true supernatural identity. In *Haunted Furniture*, 1885 (formerly Stedelijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ostend [destroyed during World War II]; Lesko, 1985: 99) two figures, a small girl and her older female companion, sit together at a table preoccupied with their respective activities, reading and sewing, surrounded by a series of floating masks and skulls at the edges of the work while the young girl looks up from her book as an unseen skeleton approaches her left elbow. Within *The Haunted Mantelpiece* (or *Fireplace*), 1888 (Pl. 119b) there appear two ladies in the foreground, engaged in conversation, while the apparition of the head of a third lady rises unnoticed from the mantelpiece above.

In addition to some of Ensor's works being reminiscent of *tsukumogami* Ensor's use of a mirror to highlight the supernatural may also remind one of the notion that a Japanese ghost, not unlike a Western ghost, will reveal its true identity when faced with a reflective surface (Riche, 1983: 6). The charcoal work *The Devil's Mirror* 1888 (Lesko, 1985: 100; Fig. 4) and the drawing *Mirror with Skeleton*, 1890 (Pl. 123a) may both be compared to the print *Jigoku-dayu's reflection* by Yoshitoshi, 1882 which shows the courtesan Jigoku-dayu sitting down and looking into a mirror which reflects back an image of a skeleton (Pl. 123b). Jigoku-dayu was the Hell Courtesan who was adopted and educated by Priest Ikkyū (1394-1481). Jigoku-dayu was depicted in many Japanese prints, usually with a skeleton parade and including scenes of Hell, to convey the moral message of the moment of enlightenment when one of questionable morals is reminded of their own mortality and chooses to abandon their old lifestyle in favour of a more

honourable and virtuous future. Perhaps Ensor related to the idea of a mirror reflecting one's true image and it could be that Ensor chooses to portray the reflection only because he wanted his audience, the *Bourgeoisie* or his Academic critics, to be confronted with their true reflection, one of death and the grotesque.

Finally, in relation to Ensor, we need to discuss the impact of the *yōkai* tradition upon his obsession with masks. In Japanese culture there is a long established tradition of masking that occurs in two discrete contexts. The first of these is the theatre but the second is specifically in relation to *yōkai* and here the masks emblemise the characteristics of particular *oni* that are well known from Japanese ghost literature. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century many such *oni* masks made their way to Western Europe where they were often exhibited and reproduced in exhibition and sale catalogues. Several collectors in Paris owned examples of *oni* masks including Gillot who exhibited some of the items from his collection in Paris in 1904 (Pl. 125). Each of the masks represents a specific *oni* from a given location, the first, for example, being the *Oni of the Rashomon Gate*. Ensor, of course, drew his inspiration for his masks, both painted and sculpted from many different sources. Conventionally, art historians explain his obsession with mask imagery by referencing it to his love of the popular carnival mask but now, perhaps, we might add another potent source of inspiration to his mask-making, that of the Japanese *oni* mask since he not only references such masks overtly in his *Still-Life: Chinoiserie* paintings of 1907 (Pl. 117) but references them in at least two of the masks that have come down to us from the Ensor inheritance (Pl. 125b). The first of these is a mask in white (the fourth of the series pictured in the grid working from top left to bottom right) whilst the second is a mask in black (the eighth of the series pictured in the grid). We can then read references to masks such as these throughout Ensor's painted *oeuvre*, not standing alone as the sole masking reference admittedly, but taking their part alongside mask images drawn from other sources.

In his recollections Ensor comments:

"[...] I was also deeply moved by the mysterious stories about fairies, ogres and malevolent giants- marvellous tales these, driveled [*sic*] interminably by a good old Flemish maid who was wrinkled, dappled, pepper-and-salt gray [*sic*] and silver. I was even more fascinated by our dark and frightening attic, full of horrible spiders, curios, seashells, plants and animals from distant seas, beautiful

chinaware, rust and blood-colored [*sic*] effects, red and white coral, monkeys, turtles, dried mermaids and stuffed Chinamen.” (Edebau, 1976: 9).

This quotation indicates something of the eclecticism with which Ensor approached his art and here he identifies but a few of the items that would later haunt his painting. We cannot claim that the Japanese *yōkai* tradition was the sole nor even the most important source upon which he drew, but tucked away in that attic store, hitherto unnoticed by the art historian and gathering dust has been many a “dried mermaid” (Pl. 47) waiting patiently to be dusted off and appreciated for its own distinctive role in Ensor’s art.

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1. *Kiyohime Hidaka-gawa ni jatai to naru zu (Kiyohime Changing into a Serpent at Hidaka River)*: Kiyohime’s father owned an inn at the edge of the village of Masago where each year the monk Anchin would stay during his annual pilgrimage to Kuman Shrine. Kiyohime eventually, after many years of his visiting the inn, fell in love with Anchin but when she declared this to him he explained that he could not, as a devout monk, return her love. Kiyohime was insistent and so Anchin hurried back to the monastery to avoid further confrontation. After a few days Kiyohime followed him but she could not cross the flooded Hidaka river to reach Anchin at the Dojo Temple on the opposite side. So consumed was she by her emotions for Anchin and her desperation to reach him that Kiyohime transformed into a serpent and swam across the river. Anchin had attempted to hide from Kiyohime under the temple’s bronze bell. Kiyohime coiled herself around the large bell, melting it with the intensity of her rage at not be able to have Anchin, thus killing them both (Stevenson, 1983: 40).
  2. *Nuke-kubi* are humans that have been cursed into becoming these *yōkai* whose head, when asleep, can leave their body to travel in search of blood to drink. They are similar to the *rokuro-kubi* mentioned above but excluding the long, winding neck connecting the roaming head to the sleeping body (Meyer, 2012: 126).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation has been to explore the validity of the claim made by Jean Vinchon in his essay of 1924 that Japanese *yōkai* imagery exerted an impact upon the creative practice of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> avant-garde artists in Western Europe. In order to assess his claim our study began with a consideration of the *yōkai* tradition. Having characterised and discussed the nature of *yōkai* lore and demonology in traditional Japanese culture the dissertation identified the varied ways in which Japanese artists alluded to such ghosts and demons within their work. We find such ghosts and demons represented not only in Buddhist handscrolls and woodblock prints but also in three-dimensional forms of art such as *netsuke*, *oni* masks, sculptures and popular art forms such as *ningyo* mummies. These diverse artistic mediums pictured a world that existed just beyond the fringes of the material world in which we live, a world which we, now, in our post-Enlightenment frame of mind, might question, but which, to the Japanese imagination was ever present and just as real as the world of everyday affairs. *Yōkai* imagery, whilst never a major genre in the visual arts of Japan was, nevertheless, of enormous significance.

The supernatural within Japanese culture is lodged deep within the traditions of Japanese society. The idea of the ghostly and demonic realm originally emerged as an oral aid for moral guidance and then secured its place within cultural traditions by being woven into the religious rituals of the Shintō and Buddhist beliefs. The imagery of the *yōkai* was subsequently used as an artistic and allegorical tool with which artists such as Kuniyoshi and Yoshitoshi could comment upon or satirise the societal restrictions enforced by the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century this unconscious acceptance of and respect for the supernatural by Japanese culture was (and to some extent still is) entirely the opposite to the attitude of Western cultures towards the supernatural, which, at the time of the Industrial Revolution, was very much one of detachment in which ghost stories were a form of entertainment and nothing more.

When Japanese art and artefacts made their journey to Western Europe largely in the period after the restoration of the Meiji, it was natural that a certain percentage of such art works should feature the ghosts and demons of the Japanese imagination. Private

collectors such as Henri Vever, Samuel Bing, Charles Gillot and others possessed examples of prints, *netsuke*, *oni* masks and sculptures that gave vivid and often frightening expression to the extensive vocabulary of supernatural creatures in Japanese culture. In particular we have clear evidence that the series of *hyaku monogatari* prints, as well as the *manga* volumes by Katsushika Hokusai, were present in both private and public collections. The popularity of such prints is evidenced through the duplication of some print editions in more than one collection, such as *Onoe Baikō as a female ghost holding a baby* (or *Ghost of the Swamp*) by Utagawa Kunisada which is cited as present in the collections of both the Van Gogh brothers and Henri Vever.

Traditionally, Art History has privileged the impact of many other genres of Japanese art upon the European avant-garde of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century such as *bijin-ga* (the 'portraits of beautiful women'), *yakusha-e* (the *kabuki* actor portraits), the erotic art of *shunga* and, of course, and most notably, the landscape prints of artists such as Hiroshige. Relatively little work, if any, has been undertaken to assess the impact of the *yōkai* tradition upon Symbolist practitioners, to whom the *genre* would undoubtedly have appealed more than most given their desire to penetrate the *au delà* and to breach the boundaries between this, the world of material phenomena, and the 'other', noumenal world of the indeterminate of which the Japanese *yōkai* tradition seemed to speak.

In attempting to assess the extent to which the European avant-garde might have exploited this tradition and the reasons as to why they should have done so, attention focussed upon the existing traditions and discourses regarding 'ghost' imagery in the visual arts in Europe. It was shown that at times of impelling historical circumstance artists in the European tradition often pulled ghost imagery into play in their works. The role of such ghost imagery was examined principally in the work of artists such as Grunewald, Blake and Fuseli. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century artists such as Beardsley, who were working in the context of a rapidly developing modernity and who considered themselves to be the victims of it, were anxious to reawaken this archaic language of the 'other' but to give it new form and expressiveness by exploiting the language of the *yōkai* tradition, which had recently become available to them through a developing *japonisme* and *japonaiserie* promoted by artists such as Whistler, Manet, Degas, Monet and others.



The socio-political, economic, cultural and philosophical *impasse* in which late 19<sup>th</sup> century artists in Western Europe found themselves goes a long way to explaining why they should have made an appeal to the supernatural, to a world of ‘the beyond’, seeking an escape from the what they perceived to be the fallacy of modernity grounded as it was on Enlightenment promises of progress that had failed to materialise. *Yōkai* imagery, it might argued, provided the Symbolist generation with a potent vocabulary through which they could articulate their discontent. In many ways, the Symbolists partook of a long-established tradition in Western artistic discourse in which supernatural imagery had been exploited for allegorical purposes but enlivened and extended it by bringing to bear a completely new and more exotic vocabulary of figures and forms with which to articulate their views.

Our exploration turned attention to particular case studies of artists in France whose work might be seen to owe a debt to *yōkai* imagery. Redon’s personal biography and the specific socio-political, economic and cultural context in which he found himself was explored as a means of suggesting his receptivity not only to the world of ‘the beyond’ as an idea but to Japanese *yōkai* imagery in particular, as a means of expressing his frustrations with the banal, mediocre and humdrum life permitted him by post-Enlightenment modernity and as a means of charting an escape into a world of the imagination. *Yōkai* imagery, we might argue, offered Redon a potent means of artistic expression. However, at this juncture, our conclusions must remain speculative. Whereas Redon moved within circles in which the Japanese *yōkai* tradition was well known and, we might suggest, was exposed to it, we lack the firm evidence that a more extended research exercise might yield as to his actual knowledge of this tradition even though visual comparisons are compelling.

Gauguin, we have argued, employed the rhetoric of the Japanese *yōkai* tradition in a similar way. Again personal biography was perceived as important as was his own very personal experience of the bankruptcy of bourgeois culture and the failure of modernity in the form of the stock market crash of 1883, which ultimately pushed him into a career as a painter. Gauguin attempted to oppose what he considered the crass materialism of his age by recovering a sense of the spiritual and supernatural in his work and by retreating to a more ‘authentic’ and ‘primitive’ way of life. In attempting to articulate his views we have much clearer evidence than we do in the case of Redon of Gauguin’s use

of *japonisme* and *japonaiserie* since at least two of his early still-life paintings refer directly to Japanese prints. This offers an evidential base upon which we might proceed to argue that the transformative nature of such *yōkai* as the shape-shifting *kitsune*, the demonic *oni*, or the deformed imagery of the floating *yūrei* may have inspired some of Gauguin's more transformative works such as *Oviri*. When Gauguin arrived in Tahiti he found it already extensively colonised and almost (though not entirely) lacking that 'authentic' culture that was at one with Nature and the spirit world of 'the beyond'. We then argued that, in his attempt to recreate what he supposed was that original 'mythic' and superstitious culture of the Tahitians, Gauguin made recourse to the nearest parallel that he could find, the *yōkai* tradition of the Japanese that was known to him through the woodblock prints and other mediums.

Our pathway then turned towards the world of late 19<sup>th</sup> century European design and specifically to the role of *yōkai* imagery in Art Nouveau. Discussion at this juncture was necessarily narrow and constrained due the parameters of the research in hand and therefore focussed upon particularly compelling comparisons. It was suggested that certain themes, particularly Japanese marine images, inspired the work of the Maison Vever, whilst glass and ceramic artists such as Gallé and Dalpayrat employed *yōkai* imagery in their work to far more subversive ends than simply stating their difference by exploiting the 'exotic' and 'bizarre' qualities of a tradition far removed from their own. Gallé, it is suggested, employed the iconography of 'hungry ghosts' from the Buddhist handscrolls to characterise the bigotry, self-centredness and anti-Semitism of wider society which he felt had placed Dreyfus in the dock. In addition the *yōkai* imagery of the Japanese offered artists of Art Nouveau a whole range of new and expressive forms for exploration. The strange, novel and bizarre imagery of the *yōkai* tradition and its deployment of abstraction liberated the creative imagination of Art Nouveau and provided a means by which it could escape the banal trammels of utility, efficiency and what they considered to be the *cul-de-sac* of form fitting function.

To draw the dissertation to a close we then explored the ways in which artists beyond France might have responded to such imagery. Toorop may have explored the innovative forms of the *yōkai* tradition, Delville might have reinterpreted its unusual scenarios and formulations and it is almost certain that we can see Ensor exploiting the genre for his own expressive purposes.

We may conclude, therefore, that sufficient evidence exists to show that the *yōkai* genre did, indeed, exert an impact upon avant-garde thought and practice in Western Europe and that the claim of Jean Vinchon made in his essay of 1924 was correct (Vinchon, 1924). What is really required at this juncture, however, is a deeper and more developed research intervention than the current format provides in order to make more informed judgements about the extent of the Western European reliance on the *yōkai* tradition and the uses to which it was put by avant-garde artists and designers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Whilst many of the findings of this dissertation remain, to some degree and at this point in time, speculative, there is quite clearly a case for more extensive research in this area. More, surely, remains to be discovered about artists' own personal collections not only of Japanese prints in general but of *yōkai* works in particular. Which exhibitions of Japanese art, of which there were very many in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, did they visit? Which collectors did they know? To which societies of Japanese art lovers did they belong? What might a more extensive and thorough archival investigation reveal in respect of the impact of the *yōkai* genre upon them and upon their work?

If, however, as this dissertation suggests, there *is* a clear borrowing on the part of British, French, Dutch and Belgian Symbolists from the *yōkai* tradition of Japan to what extent might this be reflected in the work of practitioners elsewhere in Europe. Is there scope for arguing that Gustave Klimt, in his *Sirens* of 1889 (Pl. 126), for example, appeals to the frightening tradition of the *nukeikubi* especially given what we know already of his interest in Japanese and Chinese art (Wieninger, 2009)? What was the status of Japanese art in Vienna at the time and what was known of the *yōkai* tradition? Even more compelling perhaps is the case of one of the most iconic of modernist artists and of one of his most memorable paintings: Edvard Munch and *The Scream of Nature* of 1893 (Pl. 127) which seems to invite obvious comparison to the tradition of Japanese ghost imagery. As Briot has already pointed out in his discussion of *ningyo* mummies: "the position of the hands and the tragic expression of their faces recalls, strangely, *The Cry* by Munch" (Briot, 2012). We know that, just three years after executing *The Scream*, Munch moved to Paris and exhibited at the Gallery of Samuel Bing and yet so much remains to be clarified. There is clearly a case for pursuing the matter further which the parameters of this current project prevent. Archives, correspondence, dispersed

collections, reviews and exhibition catalogues and anything more which can now testify to the artists' exposure to *yōkai* imagery would confirm with certainty the conclusions to which this dissertation points, that, as Vinchon stated, Symbolism engaged with a *yōkai* imagination.

## Appendix I

### Glossary of Japanese Terms

- *bakemono*: monster
- *beni-e*: print hand coloured with pink which turned into *benizuri-e*: pink painted picture
- *bijin-ga*: portrait of a beautiful women
- *cha-no-yu*: Japanese tea-ceremony
- *chuban*: print approximately 19 x 26 cm
- *e*: picture
- *ehon*: picture book
- *emaki*: picture scroll
- *habahiro-hashira-e*: wide pillar picture
- *haishi-e*: print with an historical subject matter
- *hanshita-e*: copy of initial print
- *hashira-e*: tall, vertical, multi-sheet print that hung down wooden pillars
- *Hyakumonogatari*: ghost story game translating as 'One Hundred Supernatural Tales'
- *Hyakki Yagyō*: night parade of one hundred demons
- *ichimai-e*: single print
- *ishizuri-e*: stone painted picture (reverse images with white lines picked out of black or coloured backgrounds)
- *kacho-ga*: bird and flower picture
- *kai*: ghost
- *kakemono*: hanging scroll or print
- *Kimo-dameshi*: ghost story game meaning 'soul examination'
- *meisho-e*: landscape tourism print
- *misemono*: exhibition or festival
- *monogatari*: story
- *musha-e*: warrior print
- *netsuke*: miniature, carved ornament used to secure the *inrō* (ornamental box used to store personal objects when wearing a *kimono*) to the *obi* (the sash of the *kimono*).

- *nishiki-e*: print using 12+ colours
- *ōban*: large print approximately 26 x 36 cm
- *okubi-e*: half-length portrait of Kabuki actors
- *reizan*: sacred mountain regions
- *sanpuku-tsui*: narrow triptych
- *senso-e*: war print
- *shōji*: sliding paper doors
- *shunga*: highly erotic print
- *tate-e*: print of portrait orientation
- *tsukumogami*: the belief that after one hundred years of existence inanimate objects have the potential to transform into *yōkai*.
- *uchiwa*: flat, hand-held fan
- *uchiwa-e*: prints that appear on *uchiwa*
- *ukiy-e*: 'floating world' prints incorporating Western techniques of perspective
- *ukiyo*: 'floating world'
- *ukiyo-e*: 'floating world' print
- *yakusha-e*: actor print
- *yōkai*: all supernatural entities
- *yoko-e*: print of landscape orientation
- *yomihon*: book for reading

## Appendix II

### Glossary of Yōkai

#### *Bake-zōri*

Appearance: straw sandals that have become yōkai through being neglected or abandoned. They have two legs, two arms and one large eye.

Characteristics: mischievous; disturb the peace of the house at night by chanting: “*Kararin! Kororin! Kankororin! Managu mittsu ni ha ninmai!*” (*Kararin! Kororin! Kankororin! Eyes three\* and teeth two\*\*!*) (Meyer, 2012: 208-209).

*\* the three points at which the straps are attached to the sandal base.*

*\*\* the two wooden platforms attached underneath the sandal base.*

#### *Baku*

Appearance: a creature with the head of an elephant, the eyes of a rhinoceros, the body of a bear, a tail like that of an ox and the legs of a tiger.

Characteristics: a powerfully magical holy creature that guard over humans by feeding on bad dreams and nightmares (Mayer, 2012: 24-25).

#### *Dai-tengu (konoha-tengu)*

Appearance: humanoid, often with the appearance and garments of a monk; winged; red face with a long, bulbous nose.

Characteristics: very powerful, much more so than *ko-tengu*, demonic creatures who are said to be the transformed souls of narcissistic individuals not yet depraved enough to warrant a place in Hell but not worthy of a place in Heaven; considered as highly knowledgeable and wise creatures. Over time they became revered as creatures of honour. (Meyer, 2012: 82-83).

#### *Hito-dama*

Appearance: orbs of trailing, floating light; blue/white, orange or red in colour.

Characteristics: innocuous in nature they are the manifestation of the human soul (Meyer, 2012: 32-33).

### *Hitotsume-nyūdō*

Appearance: tall and humanoid, dressed in ornate priestly robes with a single, large eye in the centre of the forehead.

Characteristics: they prey on and attack lone travellers along highways and roads situated outside of towns and cities (Meyer, 2012: 86-87).

### *Hitotsume-kozō*

Appearance: childlike in stature and appearance except for a single large eye in the centre of the forehead and a long, red tongue. their attire is one of a Buddhist monk, with a simple robe and shaved head.

Characteristics: mischievous but harmless; they are fond of surprising individuals down dark alleys (Meyer, 2012: 158-159).

### *Hyakki Yagyō* (also known as *hyakki yakō*)

Appearance: all *yōkai*.

Characteristics: the *hyakki yagyō* translates as the night parade of one hundred demons which occurs monthly on a different night in differing locations within Japan; it is a night where all *yōkai* parade through the streets. The *nurarihyon* is said to lead the parade, with the *otoroshi* and the *nozuchi* (Meyer, 2012: 218-219).

### *Hyōsube*

Appearance: short in stature and humanoid in appearance with hairy bodies but bald heads; sharp teeth and sharp claws.

Characteristics: mischievous and unpredictable in mood; enjoy stealing into a house at night and drawing a bath in which to wash their filthy body-hair (Meyer, 2012: 16-17).

### *Kappa*

Appearance: child-sized but powerfully built for swimming with webbed hands and feet, scaled skin with a beak and shell akin to a turtle. They also have a hollow dish or well in the crown of the skull which is the source of their power and strength if filled with water; if empty the creature will become paralysed and would likely die.

Characteristics: mischievous and stubborn but also honourable; they will honour any promise that they have made. Also intelligent, especially in areas pertaining to



medicine; will attack and attempt to drown swimmers in their area of water (Meyer, 2012: 12).

#### *Kami-kiri*

Appearance: small, withered creatures with long, beaked faces and scissors-like pincers for hands.

Characteristics: they attack by cutting the hair of their victims while they are unaware (Meyer, 2012: 204-205).

#### *Kasa-obake\**

Appearance: a paper parasol or umbrella with two eyes, a long tongue and one foot where the umbrella handle would be.

Characteristics: harmless; they will hop about on their one foot sticking out their long tongue and potentially licking passers-by (Meyer, 2012: 208-209).

*\*Meyer refers to this yōkai as karakasa-kozō*

#### *Kitsune*

Appearance: a fox

Characteristics: highly magical; shapeshifters - are known to transform into a human form in order to deceive other humans for both good and evil motives; good *kitsune* act as messengers for the Shintō god Inari (Meyer, 2012: 176-177).

#### *Kitsuni-bi*

Appearance: fox fire; floating orbs of coloured flame.

Characteristics: can only be seen by night; formed by *kitsune*; sometimes used by *kitsune* to disorient humans and lure them away from their destination (Meyer, 2012: 178-179).

#### *Ko-tengu (karasu-tengu)*

Appearance: ornithoid, often wearing robes and carrying a (stolen) weapon.

Characteristics: wild; less powerful and intelligent, but more malicious and violent, than *dai-tengu*. Over time they became seen as more mischievous than malicious (Meyer, 2012: 80-81).

### *Kyūbi no kitsune*

Appearance: a fox with white fur and nine tails.

Characteristics: the most powerfully magical *kitsune* that are all-seeing and all-knowing; have usually lived for approximately one thousand years (Meyer, 2012: 176-177).

### *Ningyo*

Appearance: akin to a Western mermaid although much more hideous and frightening in demeanour and appearance, with the tail of a fish and either just the head or the whole upper body and arms of a human.

Characteristics: their flesh is said to bestow upon those that consume it eternal youth however the curse of the ningyo is extremely dangerous and powerful (Meyer, 2012: 108-109).

### *Nozuchi*

Appearance: large creatures, caterpillar or snake-like in shape; covered in fur; no eyes or nose but have a wide mouth.

Characteristics: one of the oldest *yōkai*; they reside mostly in trees or at the top of a hill and feed on the surrounding wildlife (Meyer, 2012: 28-29).

### *Nuke-kubi*

Appearance: Ordinary women during the day.

Characteristics: At night, while they are asleep, its heads become detached and will travel, independent of its sleeping body. The *nuke-kubi* is a more malevolent *yōkai* than the *rokuro-kubi* (Meyer, 2012: 126-127).

### *Nurarihyon*

Appearance: elderly man; short, with an enlarged head and stooped gait; wears a kimono or robes.

Characteristics: the most powerful and distinguished leader of all the *yōkai* the *nurarihyon*, alongside the *otoroshi* and the *nozuchi* heads the procession of the *hyakki yagyō* (the night parade of one hundred demons) (Meyer, 2012: 120-121).

### *Nure-onna*

Appearance: a serpent with the head (and sometimes arms) of a woman; she has long, black hair, normally depicted as wet and clinging to her head and body.

Characteristics: Will appear as a woman and baby that will cry for help to those passing by; when help appears they will convince the person to hold their 'baby' which, once taken, becomes as heavy as stone rendering the person immobile, thus allowing the Nure-onna to feed on them by sucking their blood (Meyer, 2012: 102-103).

### *Oni*

Appearance: very large creatures with long tusks, horns, a mass of untamed hair and either red or blue skin, often depicted wearing only a loincloth.

Characteristics: they are creatures of pure evil, created in Buddhist Hell from the most wicked of humans and designed to punish the most sinful of souls in Hell (Meyer, 2012: 66-67).

### *Oni-bi*

Appearance: small balls of hovering flames; white or blue in colour.

Characteristics: appear in groups of up to thirty, usually in large, uninhabited open spaces such as forests, fields or graveyards; use their light to lure the chosen victim (human or animal) towards their location where they will converge upon the victim consuming its 'life energy' until it dies (Meyer, 2012: 29-30).

### *Onryō*

Appearance: a form of *yūrei* who hold the appearance of the manner in which they died, which was usually a violent end as *onryō* often die as a result of a strong passion such as hatred, jealousy or even love.

Characteristics: extremely vengeful and dangerous; they will haunt and torment their killer, those responsible for their death or the focus of their passion (be it jealousy, hatred or love). The curse of the *onryō* is so powerful that it will linger long after the *onryō* has passed over. Oiwa\* is an example of an *onryō* (Meyer, 2012: 164-165).

*\*see end note 2, Chapter I.*

### *Otoroshi*

Appearance: a four-legged monster with blue or orange skin, a long mane concealing their bodies, and have sharp claws and tusks.

Characteristics: Tend to hide in high places such as on a roof or over a doorway or *torii* (the stand-alone entrance to a shrine) from which they can pounce on and devour their victims which tend to be wild animals, not humans, unless the human is doing something particularly “wicked” (Meyer, 2012: 148-149).

### *Mokumoku-ren*

Appearance: eyes that form in damaged *shōji* (the paper partitions of the sliding doors found in a Japanese home).

Characteristics: harmless; observe and spy on members of the household; often a sign that other *yōkai* are present in the home (Meyer, 2012: 208-209).

### *Rokuro-kubi*

Appearance: Ordinary women during the day but have an elongated neck at night.

Characteristics: At night, while they are asleep, their necks become elongated and will explore, while the body remains sleeping. *Rokuro-kubi* tend to be less aggressive than *nuke-kubi* (Meyer, 2012: 124-125).

### *Tatsu*

Appearance: dragon-like with scaled skin and a long body ending in a tail. Also bearded and horned with sharp teeth and sharp claws.

Characteristics: extremely wise and powerful magically; some use their wisdom and power for good, others for evil. They are one of the oldest *yōkai* and will have accumulated a great store of treasure and magical objects which they store in their homes which are usually elaborate palaces located at the bottom of vast bodies of water such as lakes, seas or oceans (Meyer, 2012: 21-22).

### *Tengu*

See *Dai-tengu* and *Ko-tengu*

### *Tsuchi-gumo*

Appearance: a giant spider, larger than a human. Also known as an 'Earth Spider' (see Pl. 4a-d, Chapter I, *Minamoto Raikō and the Earth Spider*, 1843 by Utagawa Kuniyoshi)

Character: will use shape-shifting and illusions to attract and capture their, usually human, prey (Meyer, 2102: 43-44).

### *Umi-bōzu*

Appearance: a giant humanoid shadow that rises out of the sea, usually only the head and shoulders are visible; black in colour with a bald head and no clothing.

Characteristics: appears to ships on a calm night causing a terrifying storm with the intention of destroying the vessel (Meyer, 2012: 114-115).

### *Ushi-oni*

Appearance: A form of *oni* with the body and face resembling an ox yet the horns and teeth of an *oni* and six, giant, spider-like legs that end in long, pointed talons.

Characteristics: Most *ushi-oni* live on the coast and will destroy nearby towns, killing the town's inhabitants and leaving the town cursed and diseased (Meyer, 2012: 100-101).

### *Uwan*

Appearance: this *yōkai* was originally known mainly by the sound it made "*uwan*" rather than its appearance however when the monster is depicted it is shown with a hunched and naked upper body, a bald head and a wide, grinning mouth full of sharp teeth. In place of hands it has three clawed fingers.

Characteristics: *uwan* are found lurking around ancient buildings or temples and will torment those victims that pass by the *uwan*'s dwelling place by scaring them with its loud shouts of "*uwan*" from the darkness (Meter, 2012: 152-153).

### *Yama-uba* (also known as *Onibaba*)

Appearance: an elderly lady

Characteristics: Entice travellers into their huts with the promise of food and shelter and then when their 'guests' are asleep will transform into an ugly witch and attempt to kill and eat their victims (Meyer, 2012: 78-79).

### *Yamawaro*

Appearance: child sized, boyish; humanoid with hairy body and head; have one eye in the middle of their forehead.

Character: like *hyōsube* enjoy stealing into a house at night and drawing a bath in which to wash their filthy body-hair; will help humans working in their area if rewarded with food (Meyer, 2012: 54-55).

### *Yōkai*

The general term for all supernatural ghosts and creatures.

### *Yūrei*

Appearance: female *yōkai*; they are usually depicted as white or translucent with long, lank hair that hangs over the face, no feet and their arms tend to be bent at the elbow and drawn into the waist with the hands hanging loosely down at the wrist.

Characteristics: *Yūrei* are the ghosts of individuals whose death was unjust or sudden. They will haunt a place or a person that holds a connection relevant to how or why they died and will not leave until they feel their death has been avenged or resolved. Okiku\* is an examples of a *yūrei* (Meyer, 2012: 162-163).

*\*see end note 1, Chapter I.*

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